The Case of Peter Flanigan *Walter Pincus*

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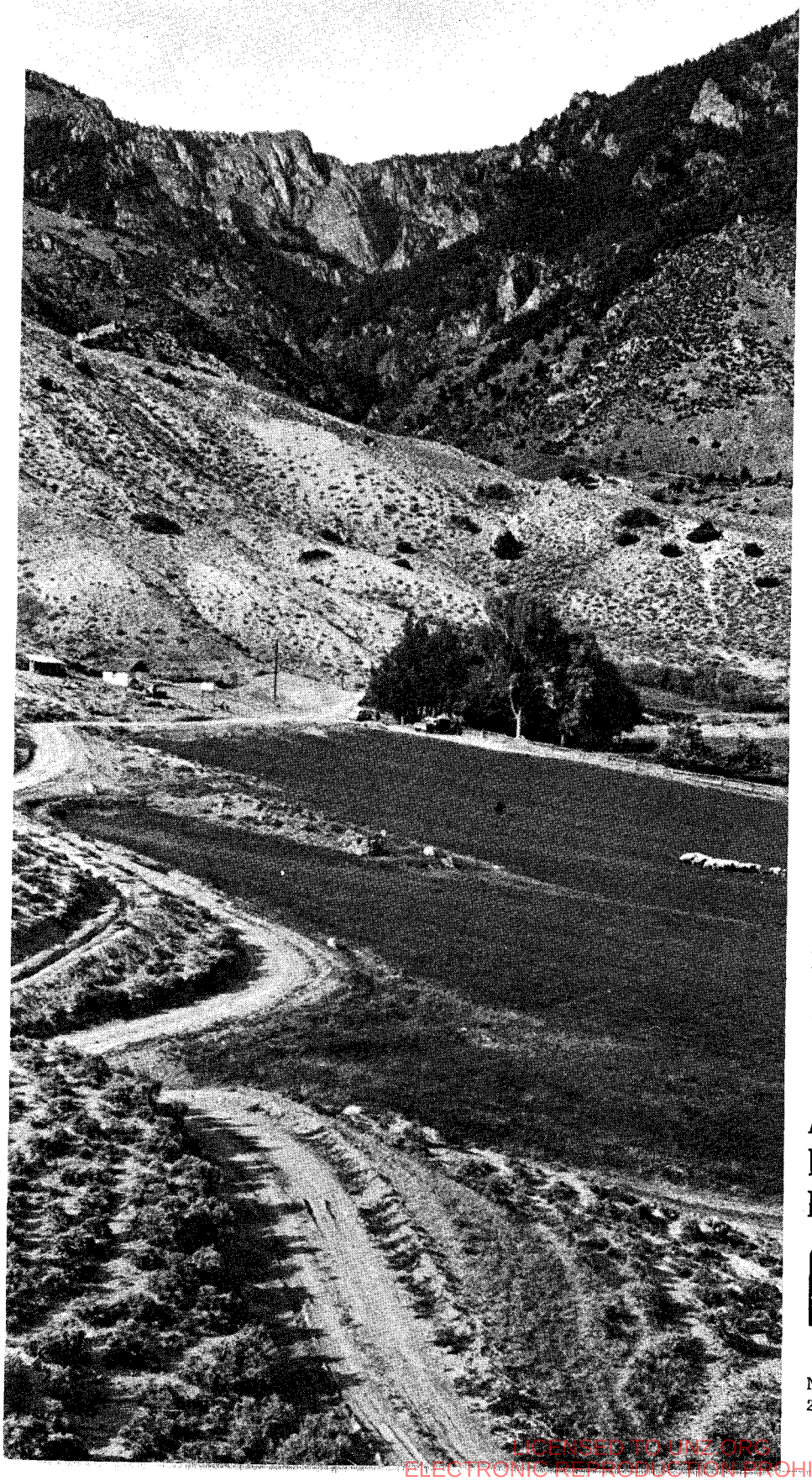

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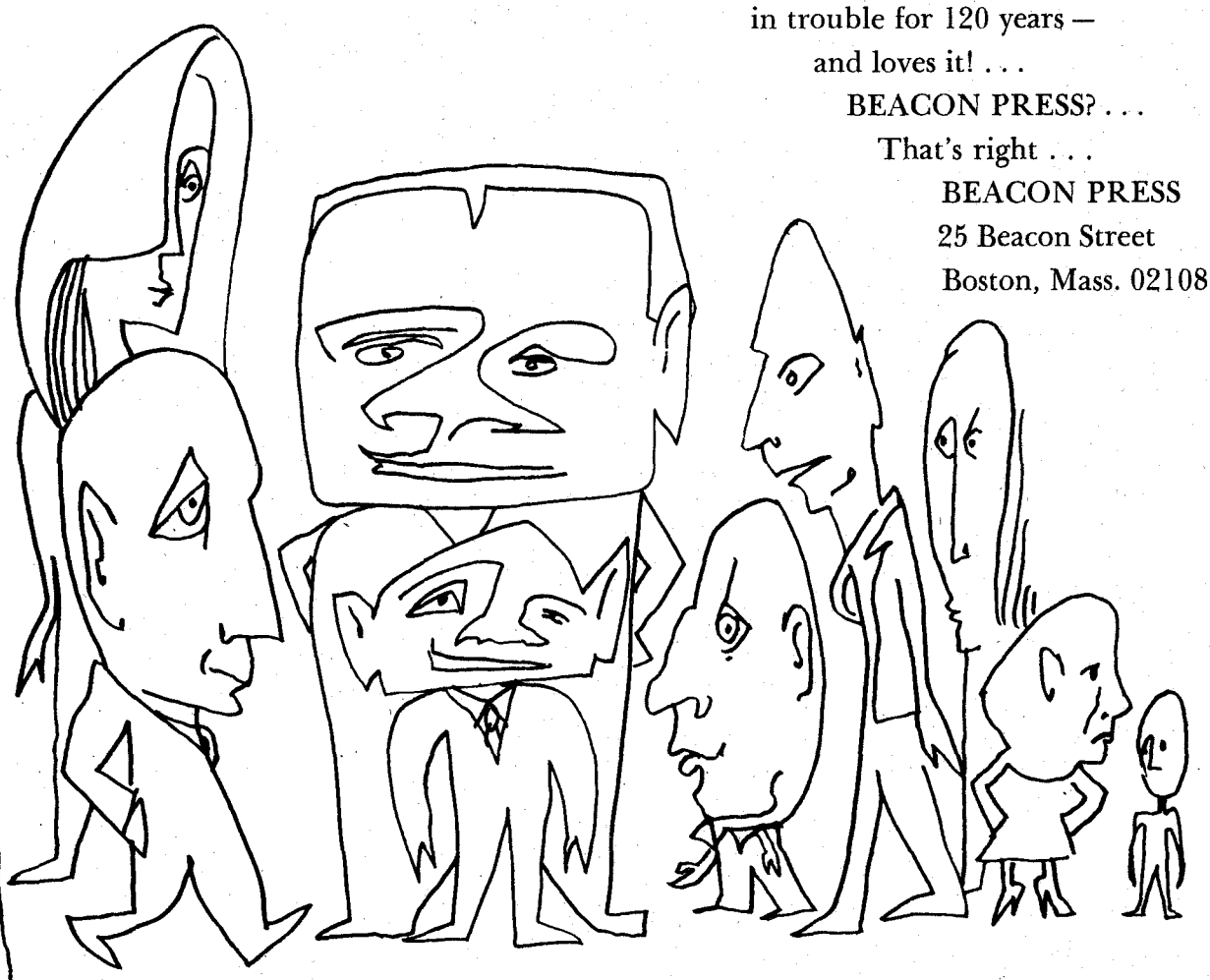

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TRB

from Washington
October 19, 1974

Placebo?

Halfway through President Ford's speech to Congress last week on the economy he remarked, "Make no mistake. We do have a real energy shortage." Several of us looked at each other and exclaimed, "What do you know." It was as electrifying as a damp blotter.

To his credit Mr. Ford, when it came to taxes, did not use the old Nixon cliché in getting over the hurdle. One could almost see the former President looking up brightly, smirking and observing, "The easy thing to do would be to avoid the subject."

Jerry Ford was more direct. He admitted advisers had urged him to delay the matter till after the election. The crowd squirmed a bit.

He paused, his voice dropped, and he added quietly, "But I shall not play politics with America's future." It was a touching instant, there was a little applause, and it passed into history that Mr. Ford was making a mild gesture toward soaking-the-rich.

Not very much of the latter, heaven knows. The Ford advisers put together a crash program that has some good points and some weak ones and is better in what it urges than in what it does. "It's not a block-buster, it's not an instant cure," Treasury Secretary Simon, looking like a successful Wall Street broker with a near-genius IQ, explained to the press before the speech, giving the mood between the lines: "We have in the United States more government than we need; more government than we are willing to pay for! This is a balanced program, minimizing government controls. Controls just make inflation worse."

And so we are all going voluntarily to cut back on gasoline and on heat, and wear WIN buttons in our lapels, and help subsidize new homes and maybe even the unemployed, by a five percent surtax on income taxes of families with incomes above $15,000 (to raise $2.6 billion), and five percent surtax on corporate income taxes (to raise $2.1 billion). The poor will get maybe $1.6 billion in tax relief, and the corporations, through a liberalized investment tax credit, $2.7 billion. That means that the tax benefits to corporations will more than offset their surtax.

Liberal economist Walter Heller says the recession threatens to become the longest since the 1930 depression, with unemployment reaching seven percent next spring. He advocates more federal spending to stimulate faltering elements of the economy rather than less spending as pledged by Messrs. Ford and Simon. One wonders about Mr. Ford: at his Rose Garden press conference last week he would not even acknowledge that a recession exists.

This column will hold off final judgment for a while, however, and see how things work out. Mr. Ford has opened a few holes in the one-dimensional economics that helped get us into this mess—sole reliance by conservatives on tight money and budget-cutting and the unexpressed hope that maybe a little recession would teach those unions a lesson. We have a hunch that as stagflation continues Mr. Ford will find it necessary to put into effect other optional proposals, and that the "old-time religion" will sprout heresies. Primarily it was lack of urgency that was disappointing. When the garrison is attacked the sentry roars the alarm. This was only a mild, "Time to wake up, please."

Meanwhile Congress has hurried off to campaign, President Ford is making a couple of out-of-town political speeches a week, and Nelson Rockefeller, the still uncrowned crown prince, is waiting confirmation. Vice President Rockefeller, if confirmed, will be the most powerful figure ever to sit in that anomalous office; the story of his largesse to aides, associates and public officials shows how money helps. He gave a going-away present of $50,000 to his former policy adviser, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in 1969 when the latter joined the federal government. He contributed generously to a score of Republican congressmen—all perfectly legitimately, it would appear, in the absence of any legal limit. One Rockefeller adviser, William Ronan, now chairman of the New York and New Jersey Port Authority, got $550,000 on leaving the princely service. He is also lavish, of course, in civic and national philanthropies, in accordance with the fine family tradition of his remarkable clan. If Rocky ever gets to be President—and there is a lot of talk now that Mr. Ford might retire after two years in view of his wife's illness—we can study the power of presidential office in conjunction with great wealth.

Just the other day we watched the AP news ticker chew out the following items in close succession, feeding some kind of hunger in the American soul:

► "As he walked back to the White House from worship service at St. John's Episcopal Church, Ford told newsmen, 'We're in very good shape,' in preparation for the nationally televised and broadcast anti-inflation address."

► "Tall, blond and wearing a new red chiffon dress and her mother's borrowed long white gloves, 17-year-old Susan Ford made her public debut as a White House hostess before Washington's diplomatic corps. . . ."

► "The Fords have a new addition to their White House family—a golden retriever named Liberty. After church Sunday morning, President Ford in his shirtsleeves, and Susan in blue jeans, brought Liberty onto the south lawn for the benefit of photographers. . . ."

This kind of thing goes on all the time; the presidency, you know. Everybody loves a fairy-tale and the White House life is a fairy-tale for millions. This is all right within reason; the presidency is a unifying force, like the flag. Mr. Ford is legitimately trying to harness the force now in the war on inflation. But where do you draw the line? Probably no other democracy is so vulnerable to a charismatic demagogue who has won the presidency, let us say, in time of turmoil and follows the Nixon guidepost. That fine lady Margaret Chase Smith, one-time senator from Maine, suggests a constitutional amendment to provide a special election in the event that a President is impeached or resigns in the face of impeachment proceedings. Many Americans are concerned, she says, about a situation in which a discredited ex-President made the personal selection of his successor and received a sweeping pardon from the man he chose. Some will ponder the idea as Mr. Ford makes his dramatic personal explanation of the pardon to the House Judiciary Committee.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC *A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 171, No. 16, Issue 3119, October 19, 1974. Published weekly (except the issues of January 12, July 13, July 27, August 17) and distributed by* The New Republic, *1244 19th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Phone 331-7494. Single copy, 50¢; Yearly subscriptions, $17; foreign, $20; armed forces personnel or students, $10. Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies and changes of address to Subscription Department,* The New Republic, *381 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43302.* *Copyright 1974 by The New Republic, Inc.* *Item g. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide.*

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Biting The Bullet?

If inflation can be whipped by creating recession, the United States and much of the rest of the world have been in the process of accomplishing that objective since the start of this year, though you can't tell it yet by the price level. What President Ford proposed in his economic message last week is that we stick to it—stick to firm limits on public spending and private credit that have successfully pushed economic activity downward. He urged Congress to increase the federal government's prospective budgetary surplus in fiscal 1975 by limiting public outlays to $300 billion or less. He announced that Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns had promised a steady hand on the money supply while judiciously avoiding a credit crunch. In time, he assured us, with patience, belt-tightening, and a slow but steady decline in economic activity we will win. It was an enormously long address, full of quite good phrases and conventional pieties, signifying little. The central fact of inflation is the wage and price spiral. That Mr. Ford did not touch.

The rate of economic growth in the US from the first to the second quarter of this year was 7.6 percent, compared to 9.6 during the same period in 1973. For the ailing stock market and ailing industry in general, the President wants a 10 percent investment tax credit, up from the four percent credit for utilities and a 7.5 percent for the rest of industry now prevailing. That stimulus will have little short-run effect on inflation. It will, however, open up new tax loopholes. Making preferred dividends deductible from taxes, as Mr. Ford recommends, will have the same noneffect on inflation. Nor will it affect the average citizen, who doesn't own preferred stock. To the glee of the same parties, Mr. Ford also advocated a loosening of anti-pollution controls and of other environmental safeguards. That *will* have effect, on our lungs and landscape.

The unemployment rate last month was 5.8 percent (it was 4.7 percent in September a year ago). It will go higher, how much higher no one knows. For those who will be sacrificing their jobs on the altar of orthodox economics, the President proposes liberalizing unemployment insurance coverage and jobs in a Community Improvement Corps to be effective when the overall unemployment rate hits six percent or higher and stays there for at least three months. No community improvement project can last more than six months, however. According to a White House spokesman, this public works program would accommodate about 500,000 of the idle, approximately

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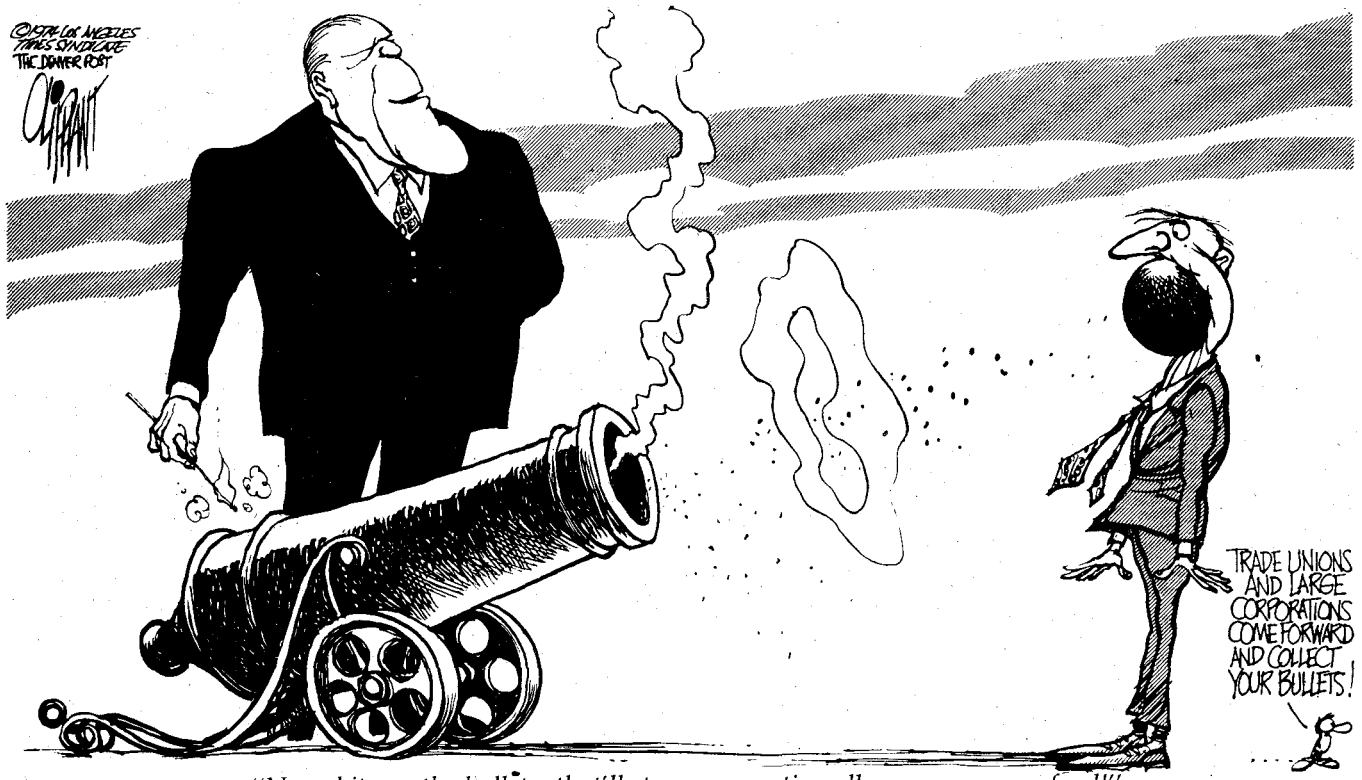
the same number thrown out of jobs last month. Finally, to the deeply depressed housing industry, Mr. Ford grants a proposed $2.5 billion government program for repurchasing home mortgages. That will provide some relief to borrowers saddled with soaring interest rates.

If he bit the bullet at all, Mr. Ford did it in providing for the financing of these benefits from a five percent surcharge on corporation incomes and personal incomes above $15,000 for families and $7500 for individuals. Here the President moved in the right direction, though he didn't move far enough. In general, assessing the net effect of the new tax and the sundry benefits, it would seem that the middle class will get an empty glass, the poor a lollipop stick, and business—unless the recession strikes deeper than expected—a fine feast of preserved profits. Aside from these tangible recommendations, the President's principal emphasis was on "voluntarism"—growing more, driving less and slower, wasting less, spending less. No rationing, production regulations, credit allocations or price controls are mentioned, except in derision.

The only thing remarkable about Mr. Ford's thoughts on the energy crisis is that they are at least a year old. He asks for voluntary conservation by consumers, merchants and industrialists but offers no new ideas for reshaping patterns of consumption. A briefing paper given out with the President's speech sets as the administration's goal a reduction of one million barrels a day in the amount of oil used in this country by the end of 1975. This represents about one-sixteenth of the oil we now consume, a savings to be reached primarily by converting oil and gas-fired electric plants to coal. The reason electric plants abandoned coal years ago will soon be apparent once again. It is a bulky fuel, expensive to transport and dangerous to mine, and when strip-mined, leaves scars on the earth that no one who has seen them can welcome. The coal most readily available today contains a high proportion of sulfur, and in order to meet clean air requirements set by Congress, many utilities in recent years stopped burning coal in favor of less toxic oil and natural gas. To reestablish coal as the primary fuel, Mr. Ford is seeking an indefinite postponement of clean air regulations for utilities, a solution that may be tolerable in rural areas—where poisons are widely dispersed—but will increase health hazards if applied in the choked cities.

Republican gospel has changed somewhat since Calvin Coolidge decreed that "the business of America is business," but not a lot. The biggest items in Mr. Ford's energy package are the concessions to big industry. There will be a new tax break for utilities. As noted, the investment tax credit allowed them is to be raised from four to 10 percent. The President proposes to grant the petroleum industry a long-sought prize in removing all federal regulation on the price of future sales of natural gas, and it will be interesting to see the effect of that on prices. He would lease out the navy's oil reserves to private companies (no public exploitation of these reserves, as recommended by Sen. Stevenson and others) and accelerate the pace at which valuable federal lands, now owned by the people, will be turned over to oil and coal companies for private development. He wants to lease 10 million acres of offshore land for oil exploration next year, five times the amount of federal land leased in 1974. He opposes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"Now, bite on the bullet—that'll stop you wasting all your money on food!"

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the strip mining bill now before a congressional conference committee as too demanding of private industry's time and capital.

In return for these many generosities, the President makes only three timid requests. He resubmits the "windfall profits tax" offered by Richard Nixon last year, a gimmick that is no tax at all but a mechanism that attempts to channel oil profits back into oil production. The other two requests are milder still. Mr. Ford asks all companies to make an "energy audit" of their operations and come into compliance with a set of voluntary energy-saving guidelines to be published by the Commerce Department. Finally, he asks the automakers to draw up for themselves a voluntary plan for reducing gasoline consumption in their cars over the next five years. "If necessary," the White House fact sheet says, "the President will present legislation to the Congress. . . ." Anyone who has observed Detroit's stubborn resistance to auto pollution laws over the last four years will find little reassurance here. What is it, we wonder, that stops the government from placing a stiff graduated tax on auto horsepower, bringing in new revenue and reducing gas consumption in one blow? If we're to drive no faster than 55, why not make it far more costly for Detroit to produce these monsters that can tear along at a hundred?

In essence the President's message was that we are heading for the wringer, deliberately and voluntarily, and all of us must sacrifice manfully in the national interest. No matter how the wounds and Bandaids are distributed, however, a discomforting question remains: can recession cure inflation? That it *can* do so is the fundamental assumption of President Ford's economic program. That it *cannot* do so is the unmistakable lesson of history. For despite recessions in 1954, 1958, 1961 and 1970-71, the advance in the price level has accelerated, moving from the "creeping inflation" that plagued President Eisenhower to the extended canter—not quite a gallop—that we have today. One estimate holds that to get inflation down to a three or four percent annual increase in prices, under present circumstances and by the administration's method, would require accepting an unemployment rate of eight percent or more. And what then? Would not a nation in the depths of so severe a recession demand restorative steps to rebuild aggregate demand—easier money, perhaps lower taxes, perhaps more generous government outlays? And would this not revivify inflation?

There must be more effective and humane ways to break the unemployment-inflation dilemma. We agree with Sen. Mansfield and some other Democrats that a first step ought to be a comprehensive and adequately enforced control over prices and wages. President Ford's instinct is to recoil from any such government intervention and to rely instead on the natural curative forces of the market. He is old enough to remember that those forces have done us in before.

Peace thru Arms

The tawdry tale of US efforts to bulwark the Chilean military junta continues with the disclosure that the Ford administration, carrying on from its predecessor, will sell Chile a number of supersonic jet fighter aircraft, including 18 F-5E Freedom Fighters manufactured by the Northrop Aviation Company and 36 A-37Bs produced by Cessna. Their total cost is expected to run to more than $70 million. The Chilean junta claims to be purchasing the planes to defend itself against neighboring Peru, itself a recipient of US weapons. In the lexicon of governments all weapons are for defensive purposes only. But the A-37B, used extensively in Vietnam, is usually deployed in support of troops combatting guerrillas, which suggests that the aircraft may be destined for service in a civil war. The decision to arm Chile flouts a vote by the Senate barring military aid to the junta on the grounds, as Sen. Kennedy said, that it is "engaged in a continuing pattern of gross violation of human rights." Following as it does the admission last month by President Ford that the Central Intelligence Agency spent several million dollars to undermine the Allende government in Chile, the aircraft sale illustrates what has happened to the old good neighbor policy: America's best neighbors are more often than not police states.

The sale of weapons to Chile is, of course, merely a tiny fraction of the export trade in conventional arms. During the past fiscal year, according to Pentagon estimates, the US sold some $8.5 billion in weapons—a twofold increase over the previous year. Nearly half of these weapons were purchased by the Shah of Iran, who is transforming his oil wealth into one of the most formidable arsenals on earth for purposes that are, again, allegedly defensive. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger argues that such sales "strengthen deterrence and promote peaceful negotiations by helping our friends and allies to maintain adequate defense forces of their own." Some friends, some allies! The truth of the matter is that we sell arms primarily to improve our balance of payments. Our foreign policy is becoming increasingly mercantile, and if the result is a spiraling arms race, so much the better for business. It would be interesting to know whether Secretary Schlesinger thinks "peaceful negotiations" would be promoted were the Soviet Union to match the US in providing aircraft, tanks and guns to any customer that could foot the bill.

Congress has authority to oversee only weapons sales covered by Defense Department credits, which amount to no more than 15 percent of the total business. The Pentagon, which peddles arms with greater freedom than the Agriculture Department exports wheat, controls the rest of the trade without limitation. It is high time that Congress move to curb a traffic that not only encourages the most lethal instincts of nations, but adds to the likelihood of local conflicts.

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Gov. Thomson's Winning Issue

No Tax New Hampshire

Milford, New Hampshire

As I write flags are flying at half mast over New Hampshire, by order of Gov. Meldrim Thomson, Jr. It is his response to President Ford's so-called clemency program for draft evaders and deserters. Thomson, who hailed the pardon of Richard Nixon as "a compassionate and necessary act," called the amnesty offer "disgraceful, insulting and exceedingly dangerous. Lowering the flags will show our mourning for Americans killed in Vietnam."

Thomson is both the candidate and the issue in this fall's gubernatorial election. A 62-year-old native of Georgia, he planted himself in the mountain village of Orford near the Vermont border about 20 years ago and opened a law book publishing company. He became active in local affairs, served on the Orford school board and in 1968 ran as a Republican in the gubernatorial primary. He lost and in 1970 ran again in the Republican primary, was defeated, bolted to run in the regular election as the candidate of George Wallace's American party, and again lost. In 1972 he squeaked into office largely because so many Republicans voted for the mayor of Concord, Malcolm McLane, who ran as an Independent, rather than cast their votes for an uninspiring Democratic contender.

In 20 months in office Thomson has demanded and received undated resignation letters from some department heads as a precondition to appointment; among them was the director of the state police. He has defied the state supreme court's ruling that his secret search of business profits tax records was illegal. Thomson said he'd do it again if the need arose. He has used his veto power an unprecedented 27 times in one session of the legislature. Constant conflict with legislative leaders led three of them to resign in order to do battle against Thomson in the primary. He launched an impressive public relations campaign in conjunction with Olympic Refineries to persuade the residents of a coastal community that it was in their best interests to allow Aristotle Onassis to install an oil refinery just off the coast near the Isle of Shoals.

When the bid by the Republican president of the Senate to take the gubernatorial nomination away from Thomson failed on September 10, the traditional coming together of the party faithful was nowhere in sight. Nor did anti-Thomson Republicans succumb to the temptation to float an Independent candidate. Instead they are showering the Democratic candidate, Richard Leonard, with pledges of support. The two unsuccessful Democratic primary candidates are serving as honorary co-chairmen of Leonard's campaign. Democrats, noted in this state more for in-fighting and intransigence than unity—"show me 10 Democrats who will speak to each other and I'll show you that you've just crossed the border into Massachusetts"—are united.

And the press, large and small, the politicos of both parties, the villagers hobnobbing over coffee in the small town diners, the millworkers on lunch break in Manchester and Berlin and Lebanon—are united in a consensus as to the outcome: Thomson is stronger than ever. He is expected to win.

This is strange, but explainable in part by the fact that Richard Leonard is a dreary choice. He is a 55-year-old criminal attorney and banker from Nashua, the state's second largest city. He is a member, as his campaign literature puts it, of "the golfing Leonards of New Hampshire." Both Richard and his late father combined golfing skills with considerable success in the courtroom.

Here is a man described by his state campaign director as "dull." He doesn't mean dumb. Leonard is supposed to be a wizard with the law. Leonard simply doesn't interest people. "If Dick would just get out there and run we could have the election. It doesn't matter what you stand for this time as long as you're against taxes and against Thomson. Dick fits that description. But he won't work for it," according to one of Leonard's paid campaign workers.

Meldrim Thomson, on the other hand, is a gracious, charming and indefatigable campaigner. His rude press releases contrast sharply with his personal manner. He loves to press the flesh. He moves across the state in his chauffeured limousine like a plantation owner delighted to be getting all the Christmas baskets delivered. A smile here, a handshake there, remembering faces and first names, pats on the back, "No sir, I'm not ever gonna let there be taxes in this state as long as I'm Governor, son" he was heard to say as he passed through one of the many trailer-camp settlements in the North Country where he has almost total voter support.

In general it is the have-nots of the state, and there are a great many of them, who are willing to work for Thomson and vote for him. He has told them there will be no sales tax. There will be no income tax. He hasn't bothered to mention that New Hampshire ranks 50th of the 50 states in per pupil state aid to education or that it ranks first in the 50 states in per capita state aid to highways. He forgets his 1972 campaign pledge to see that the unaccredited state hospital, where many of his supporters will end up some day, destitute,

NEXT WEEK: how the 93rd Congress voted on 24 key issues selected by the editors

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senile and forgotten, will be adequately funded to regain accreditation. Almost two years after that pledge, the state hospital remains a disgrace to humanity.

"Let's Keep New Hampshire a Secret," whispers a current bumper sticker. A cryptic password? A precautionary plea for amnesty? No. A polite and wistful little joke by the environmentalists who hope to stop the rapid migration into the state.

It is appropriate. We do keep secrets. Every New Hampshireman his own. The Thomson supporters have theirs: wherever the money comes from, wherever it mysteriously goes—not into services, not into salaries, not into a living wage—they have their little secret. They hug it to themselves. They're proud of it, you can see it in the faces as they cluster to be seen by Mel. Let Onassis keep his secrets, let the subdividers, the condominium developers, the politicians in the state house keep theirs. Thomson's have-not supporters will keep their own: no taxes. That's all they know, and all they need to know.

Kathy Starbuck

Ms. Starbuck *is political editor of New England's oldest weekly newspaper,* The Milford Cabinet.

Harvest Time for Democrats

The Farm Vote

Worthington, Minnesota

You can think of many reasons why the farm belt should be heavily Republican this year. Wheat and corn prices have been high, over four dollars a bushel. Soybeans are selling for nine dollars per bushel. Farmers have an undying urge to produce and were delighted to oblige when acreage limitations were lifted and they were told to plant, plant, plant. Secretary of Agriculture Butz' noisy defense of high farm prices, though upsetting to consumers, charmed them a season or two ago. Foreign sales in the last couple of years have been good, particularly for the wheat growers in the plains from Texas to the Canadian border. Nevertheless it's not a good year for Republicans in the farm belt, which could yield as many as a dozen GOP-held House seats and several Senate seats for the Democrats.

The principal reason is inflation, which scares farmers as badly as it does city folks. Production costs have doubled and tripled; they are wiping out the cattle industry and putting a merciless squeeze on the dairy farmers.

In southern Minnesota land prices have gone from $400 to as much as $1000 an acre. Interest rates are double or nearly double the six percent of a few years ago on loans most farmers must float to plant their crops. Fertilizer is up from $50 or $75 a ton, depending on the kind, to $200 and $300. Fuel, farm machinery, seed, pesticides are all way way up. Not so long ago $2.50 corn would have produced unrivaled prosperity in the corn belt; today it would bankrupt everyone.

There's a deep distrust in the farm belt of everything that comes out of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)—from crop projections to Butz' promise that exports wouldn't be restricted, a promise that blew up in his face last week when President Ford canceled a $500 million grain sale to the Soviet Union and then announced permanent monitoring of such sales, a move that sent grain prices plunging. The department currently estimates that the number of cattle in feedlots is down 25 percent, but every farmer or rancher I have talked to in several states knows differently. Large feeding operations are closing down everywhere—Billings, Montana; Leoti, Kansas; Worthington, Minnesota, to name a few. Others are running at 50 percent of capacity. A Worthington banker who makes loans to corn farmers who feed out 50 head or so with their own crops, reports he's only lent money for 400 head this year, compared with 10,000 at this time in past years. Herds are being liquidated and prices for breeding cattle have dropped to $18 to $21 per hundred-weight for breeding stock and $30 per hundred for calves that had been selling for as high as $80 when feedlots were full.

None of this has been felt at the supermarket counter, and farmers, whether in cattle, wheat or corn, resent it. For instance calves at $30 should mean one dollar to $1.10 veal, allowing for a good mark-up; yet veal prices remain high (sometimes three dollars a pound or more). The growers know there's a big inflationary rip-off somewhere. The cost of hamburger made from breeding stock (older cows) is more in line with reality on the farms, probably because the US is still importing that quality of meat. Normally when breeding stock is selling for $20 per hundred, hamburger shouldn't cost more than 60 to 70 cents per pound, and the prices were slowly dropping to that level in October.

The question of a grain reserve is tricky. Consumer forces are demanding it but farmers view it with caution or outright hostility. In the past government-controlled surpluses have been dumped on the market to break price rises. Butz did this with corn surpluses in 1972 and farmers, whose memories rival elephants', haven't forgotten. Butz loudly opposes a grain reserve and his allies in the Farm Bureau and the GOP are with him. In the northern tier of states where there have been more liberal influences at work, there's a willingness among many farmers to go along with the proposal of Sen. Humphrey to create a reserve, so long as at least two-thirds of it is under the direct physical control of farmers; then, they say, no one at Agriculture can foul them up again. In wheat country the attitude is different. The best Rep. William Roy (D,

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Kans.), who appears headed for victory over Republican Sen. Robert Dole, dares propose is an international grain reserve, provided it is insulated to prevent dumping on the US market to break prices.

Wheat growers have had three good years and don't need the cash, so they're holding onto their crop. As of early October wheat moved only when it went enough over four dollars per bushel to guarantee a good clean profit. The corn growers don't have that luxury. Their crop was hit badly this year, first by spring floods and then by a couple of early frosts. The crop is still the fourth largest in the country's history, because of a sharp increase in acreage planted, but far below the overly optimistic predictions of USDA. Those who have a crop could be in fairly good shape; those who don't are staring bankruptcy in the face, what with their heavy production costs. Though corn prices are high now, those with a crop worry about the liquidation of cattle herds. Without feedlots full of corn-fed steers, the bottom could fall out of the corn and soybean market.

It's the cattle people who are maddest at the administration. They blame their disaster on price controls on processed meat in the summer of 1973. Production costs have climbed so high they'd probably need $80 per hundred-weight instead of $40 to make a profit. Many are going out of business. Hog growers are caught in the same bind. One hears predictions on all sides that as many as 40 to 45 percent of the cattle going to market for slaughter will be grass fed (the European way). Because of the frosts that struck the corn belt, much of the crop will be ground into silage and fed to animals, but this won't produce the quality of meat Americans are accustomed to, unless it is supplemented by corn meal and the protein-laden soybean meal, and that would cause production costs to soar again. The quality of available meat could drop sharply without a corresponding drop in prices, if nothing is done about the inflationary swindle that occurs somewhere between the producer and the supermarket counter. That's something farmers would like the antitrust division of the Justice Department to get busy on.

Now once again the future looks scary to farmers. They watch the oil cartel siphon off billions and billions in profits, knowing this has added sharply to farm costs (much of the fertilizer is made from natural gas). They hear of Moroccan threats to set steep prices for phosphates, another source of fertilizer. They face chronic shortages in such staple items as binder twine and baling wire. They see the gradual shift to corporate farming, which would leave consumers at the mercy of the same kind of business mentality that is taking every cent it can during the country's worst inflationary spiral. No wonder a lot of farmers may vote Democratic.

Paul R. Wieck

White House Watch

Troubles

A White House assistant who was on duty with Richard Nixon in San Clemente for awhile noticed quite a change in the former President when he came home from the Long Beach hospital where his phlebitis was treated. The assistant wondered before Mr. Nixon entered the hospital whether he'd be found some morning on the bottom of his swimming pool. Afterward at home he was still as tired and wasted as he appeared to be in the television pictures of his departure from the hospital. But he seemed to the assistant to have snapped out of the apathy and depression that often engulfed him during the first weeks of his enforced retirement. He was talkative, feisty and angry, still cursing the Long Beach photographer whom he'd called a son-of-a-bitch and god-damning the restrictions that his ailment imposed upon him.

This report was among the few cheerful items that reached Washington from San Clemente and a lot more cheerful than what was happening to Mr. Nixon in Congress and at the Ford White House. At the risk of seeming to invite a degree of sympathy for Mr. Nixon that he does not deserve and that I do not feel for him, I summarize in this account the essence of what I've heard from his people about his situation and about the scene at what used to be the Western White House.

Any such account must begin with the atmosphere aboard Air Force One when it took Mr. Nixon, his wife, his daughter Tricia, her husband Eddie Cox, and 10 or so assistants and other staff associates from Washington to California on August 9. Mr. Nixon and his family were in his forward compartment. The assistants were in a midship staff compartment. Their recollections vary on some points, but not on the point that they shared a sense, so deeply felt that it didn't have to be spoken, that they few were a gallant band enlisted in a gallant cause, the service of Richard Nixon. One of them remembers silence throughout the trip, as on a funeral train. Another of them recalls that they were variously numbed, in trauma, near hysteria, and talkative. They knew that Mr. Nixon's formal resignation was to be handed to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at precisely 11:35 am, Washington time. Some of them kept saying to each other until that moment, "He is still the President of the United States. *He is still the President.*" Mostly, though, they remember and still talk of the sense of togetherness that bound them and would do much to see them through the first weeks of decompression and what seemed to them to be deprivation in San Clemente. At about 11 am Mr. Nixon walked aft and joined them for a few minutes. Some of them remember that they were amazed at his recovery, whether real or pretended, from the condition of incoherence and near collapse that the nation

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observed on television during his farewell to the White House staff. He joked. He had words of recognition and thanks for each of them. He told them to cheer up and they were cheered, a little.

Their sustaining sense of gallantry and togetherness has begun to fade. The attacks in the media and in Congress upon what they collectively are costing the public and the impact of those attacks upon Mr. Nixon's prospects for staff support in the future have had a depressing effect. The public listing of former press secretary Ronald Ziegler at $42,500 a year, former special assistants Frank Gannon at $35,300 and Stephen Bull at $34,000, press assistant Dianne Sawyer at $21,000, staff writer Raymond K. Price, Jr. (who wasn't on the plane) at $40,000 make the support accorded Mr. Nixon at San Clemente appear to be far more lavish than it seems to be to those providing the assistance. The annual salaries of 18 people whom the Ford staff considers to be on chargeable detail to Mr. Nixon until the six months of transition support authorized for him end next February 9 total $375,800. With either per diem expense allowances that can but in most cases don't run up to $40 per day per person, or the "justifiable expense" arrangements that Ziegler prefers and has demanded from the General Services Administration, the scale of support provided in San Clemente and Washington can be made to seem extravagant and seems so at this writing to most congressmen, Republican and Democratic. President Ford's original request on behalf of Mr. Nixon for $850,000 for the period ending next June has been cut by the House of Representatives and a Senate subcommittee to $200,000 and the Senate subcommittee has recommended a ceiling of $220,000 upon the salaries of White House and other employees detailed to Mr. Nixon during the statutory transition period of six months. If that ceiling holds and even if Congress finally prorates against it only the 18 salaries that the Ford White House considers chargeable, Mr. Nixon will have little or no money left from the initial transition period for staff support during the remainder of the fiscal year. The $100,000 so far appropriated and recommended for the period between February 9 and June 30 will allow only $45,000 for staff assistance after $55,000 in pension to be paid from it is deducted. The $45,000 is too much for many people. But I do think the San Clemente scene as his people see it is of interest, considering the all but universal impression that he is being munificently supported in his disgrace.

Imagine that you are a Nixon assistant who knew how it was at the Western White House before August 9 and are revisiting the Coast Guard base where the Nixon office compound is situated, next to the Nixon estate. At the gate where Coast Guardsmen control entry both to the base and to the office compound, uniformed sentries in white gloves go through their familiar minuet. Beyond the gate all is unbelievably changed. On the helipad where a gleaming green and white helicopter, sometimes two helicopters, always stood in waiting for the President, a tennis net and a volleyball net are stretched for the use of Coast Guard families. On the lots where 20 to 30 official cars used to be parked, three or four cars and maybe a couple of golf carts are seen. The Executive Protective Service policemen and the Secret Service agents who were always around when the President was there are no longer in sight. Agents are assigned, but not in the obtrusive numbers they used to be. Inside the lesser of two office buildings, one-story affairs that never were impressive and seem forlornly modest now, most of the cubicles are bare of occupants and furniture. Ziegler, Gannon, Dianne Sawyer, Ray Price on the latest of several visits and Lt. Col. Jack Brennan are in their offices with a couple of secretaries, but the place seems weirdly quiet. You walk to the rear. The dining patio that once was the delight of the Western White House is bare of furniture, excepting one table and four chairs. In the adjoining kitchen crates of chinaware and utensils are packed for removal. The remaining supply has been reduced to one cup, one plate, etc. per person. A few cheese sticks and a nearly empty jelly jar indicate that somebody has been using the kitchen. The navy stewards and cooks are long gone. Anne Grier, a White House secretary, cooked hotdogs and prepared tuna lunches for the group for awhile, but has stopped. They fend for themselves.

A cubicle in this wing is piled with some 40,000 pieces of unopened mail addressed to Ziegler for Mr. Nixon. Some 400,000 pieces are scattered about the place. Across an open walkway in the senior staff and presidential wing, scores of thousands of telegrams and letters are stacked in the office that used to be Henry Kissinger's. It's Mrs. Nixon's now. She seldom uses it. Mr. Nixon uses his front office occasionally, riding over from his home in a golf cart. He shares a secretary, Nora Vandersommen, with Stephen Bull and they occupy small offices near his. The office that was H. R. Haldeman's and then General Alexander Haig's is stripped and usually locked. It's to be a library for Mr. Nixon's immediate use, if and when his presidential files are released from preventive custody and shipped to California. Whether he gets them is problematical, the concern about Watergate evidence and the hatred of him being as fierce as they are in Congress and the country. The remaining Nixon tapes aside, convenient access to the sequestered documents is essential if Mr. Nixon is to fulfill the book contracts to which he must be looking for money to bail him out of debt, pay lawyers' fees, and generally support him in the style that he likes. Reports to the contrary notwithstanding, the public that he betrayed is not supporting him in that style now.

John Osborne

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The Case of Peter Flanigan

by Walter Pincus

On October 2 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a public hearing on former White House aide Peter Flanigan's nomination by President Ford to be US ambassador to Spain. Even before it was officially announced the Flanigan nomination had stirred up opposition among Senate Democrats such as Majority Whip Robert Byrd and Thomas Eagleton. Byrd was bothered by Flanigan's role in the unusual settlement of the ITT antitrust case, and Eagleton had encountered Flanigan while investigating White House pressures on the Environmental Protection Agency. But the senators who should have been most interested in Flanigan—the members of the Foreign Relations Committee—were not. And that is odd, since these same senators have been complaining for three years about big Nixon contributors being rewarded with diplomatic posts. And Flanigan was the man in the White House who had passed along those names to Mr. Nixon in the first place. It was Flanigan to whom Nixon Finance Chairman Maurice Stans had given the list of embassy-seeking big donors after the 1968 election.

One might have thought that the committee members would at least have been keenly interested in the role Flanigan played in the appointment of Ruth Farkas as our ambassador to Luxembourg. In March 1973 before the Watergate cover-up collapsed, Mrs. Farkas had told the Foreign Relations Committee that a $300,000 contribution she and her husband made to the Nixon reelection effort in the winter of 1972-73 "had absolutely nothing to do with whether I was getting an ambassadorship or not. . . ." Rep. Louis Wyman of New Hampshire, a booster of Mrs. Farkas, sent a letter to the committee supporting that statement. The senators accepted it and approved the nomination.

In July 1974, however, Mr. Nixon's former personal lawyer and fund-raiser, Herbert Kalmbach, testified under oath before the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry and told a substantially different story. Kalmbach recalled that White House aide Flanigan had telephoned him in July or August 1971: "Peter said, 'Herb we would like to have you contact a Dr. Ruth Farkas in New York. She is interested in giving $250,000 for Costa Rica.' " Kalmbach then met with Mrs. Farkas, and she had said "words to the following effect: she said, 'well, you know, I am interested in Europe, I think and isn't $250,000 an awful lot of money for Costa Rica?' " So if Kalmbach is to be believed Mrs. Farkas had been less than forthcoming in her testimony a year earlier before the Foreign Relations Committee.

Senate confirmation hearings offer an opportunity to question a nominee such as Flanigan on any and all matters that may relate to his suitability for the position he is to assume. The hearing becomes onesided, however, if the senators asking the questions are unprepared and thus unable to judge how accurately or completely the witness is answering. The confirmation process becomes meaningless when the witness realizes the senators are ill-informed, that his answers will not later be checked, that he runs little risk of being caught if he sidesteps the truth. When Mr. Flanigan came before Sen. Fulbright's committee on October 2, he knew it had not followed up on Mrs. Farkas' incomplete if not false earlier testimony. Flanigan may or may not have known that the committee staff had pulled together only the skimpiest background material on him. A chronology of the Farkas nomination was there, but Flanigan's name hardly appeared. All the committee members really had was the incriminating Kalmbach testimony.

Chairman Fulbright had earlier turned over to Eagleton—who is not a member of the committee—responsibility for making the case against Flanigan. Fulbright did not do the job himself because, as he had told Eagleton and others, he was tired of being the lone critic of these nominations. But since Eagleton was busily engaged in a Senate floor debate on cutting off military aid to Turkey, his staff did not have time to intensively examine Flanigan's past—and no one on the Foreign Relations Committee staff was put on the job. A "shotgun" approach was therefore adopted. The Library of Congress was asked to supply copies of all recent news stories about Flanigan. These were reviewed and Eagleton's case was made primarily from them.

One additional step was taken. Eagleton asked Special Prosecutor Jaworski for a report on Flanigan's situation with regard to the ongoing investigation into selling ambassadorships. Jaworski replied that Flanigan was not facing charges based on evidence then in the prosecutor's possession. He then added that the White House, when *it* had asked about Flanigan—prior to sending up his name in nomination—had been told to read Kalmbach's testimony to the House

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Judiciary Committee. The second of these points ought to have been a red alert to the committee.

After Eagleton had finished his presentation, Flanigan quickly ticked off responses to the various allegations that had been made. They were familiar to him. Some he had been fending off for years. Flanigan then turned to the Farkas contribution and the Jaworski letter. He said that the special prosecutor had "thoroughly investigated" the matter and had questioned others than Kalmbach. He said Jaworski had told the White House there was "no reason not to send [Flanigan's] nomination forward." He then called on Sen. Hugh Scott, a member of the committee, who told his colleagues that *he* had talked to Jaworski and had been told by the special prosecutor that they knew "the whole story" and it did not involve Flanigan.

Within hours Jaworski's spokesmen were disputing both Flanigan's and Scott's statements. The special prosecutor was so disturbed at how he was being used that he told his staff that in the future all such questions had to be answered by letter and not over the phone.

When Flanigan was asked about the Kalmbach statement, he said that "my recollection is that [Kalmbach] asked me did I have any ideas as to people whom he should go to solicit campaign contributions. I told him that President Nixon had had" Mrs. Farkas in mind for Costa Rica. In short Flanigan had not called Kalmbach, Kalmbach had called him.

Since Rep. Wyman had set up the Farkas-Kalmbach 1971 meeting, Flanigan was asked by the committee what he had said to Wyman. Flanigan could not recall the details of that conversation. Flanigan did suggest, however, that Kalmbach's confession to the crime of selling ambassadorial posts "was in exchange for no further investigation or no further action on some other matters." He also suggested that speculation about his own role in the Farkas nomination "grows only from this one piece of testimony from Mr. Kalmbach." In fact the information that ties Flanigan closest to the Farkas case is in a file turned over to the special prosecutor by Rep. Wyman and subsequently made available to the press in New Hampshire, where Wyman is running for the Senate.

The Wyman file as well as the Kalmbach testimony and other public records show that Flanigan first became involved in the Farkas nomination in March 1969, when Wyman met with Flanigan. The congressman had been told that Mrs. Farkas' past contributions to Republican politicians such as Sen. Javits and John Lindsay would earn her no brownie points with Mr. Nixon. But Wyman was a long-time Nixon supporter, and in April 1969 he sent a personal request to President Nixon on behalf of Mrs. Farkas. In June 1969 Flanigan called Wyman to say there was no hope of a European post but that Mrs. Farkas might get Costa Rica. That same month the State Department sent the Foreign Relations Committee a letter of intent to nominate Mrs. Farkas for Costa Rica, pending FBI clearance. Ironically the committee did not know it had that letter when Mrs. Farkas first appeared before it.

One week after the letter of intent was delivered, the committee was informed the nomination was being held up. A grand jury investigation was underway in New York City involving an alleged political contribution by Alexander's, Inc., the Farkas corporation. In February 1970—with the nomination still in abeyance—Wyman was told by Flanigan that the grand jury was causing the delay. Wyman also made note of the fact that Flanigan said there were 15 other candidates for four embassy posts, all of whom were six-figure contributors to the Nixon campaign. As of that time Mrs. Farkas had apparently given the Nixon campaign nothing. Wyman's records also show that in July 1971 he was called by Flanigan who wanted Kalmbach to interview Mrs. Farkas. Their discussion covered the fact that the Farkas family had money and that she wanted to be an ambassador.

On October 20, 1971 the New York federal grand jury indicted Judge Bernard Klieger on charges of campaign fund fraud. Alexander's was named a co-conspirator. The Farkas nomination was back on ice. Seven months later a jury found Klieger not guilty. Thirteen days later Mrs. Farkas accompanied by Rep. Wyman, met with Maurice Stans. According to Kalmbach Mrs. Farkas had been listed as a potential $250,000 contributor—a figure he says was given to him by Flanigan. On August 15, 1972 another letter of intent to name Mrs. Farkas ambassador, this time to Luxembourg, was received by the Foreign Relations Committee. Again an FBI investigation was begun. On September 20, 1972 Flanigan telephoned Wyman to say that President Nixon had approved the nomination. It was agreed, however, that her name would not be sent up immediately, because the White House did not "want to fuel fires . . . before the first of the year." Eight days after the Flanigan phone call Mrs. Farkas met again with Finance Chairman Stans and within a week a $300,000 contribution began to flow into the Nixon treasury from the Farkas family. The final Farkas check, for $5000, was received on February 21, 1973. Six days later her nomination went to the Senate.

What has Congress learned from the Watergate affair? Unless committees such as Foreign Relations begin to take their responsibilities more seriously, the answer must be "not much." It would be relatively simple, after all, for the committee to ask Rep. Wyman about his file and to ask Flanigan to return and explain his role not only in the Farkas nomination, but in the nominations of others who gave six-figure contributions to the Nixon campaign. The committee should not leave Flanigan and the public "twisting in the wind" by allowing the nomination to lapse without action. It should complete the record.

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Desperate but Not Serious

Can Italy Make It?

by Stanley Karnow

Rome

By any objective analysis Italy ought to be close to collapse. Its economy is ravaged by one of the highest inflation rates in Europe. Its foreign trade deficit, aggravated by the soaring price of Middle East oil and the rising cost of other vital imports, has been so big that the government was compelled last month to put up a part of its gold reserves as collateral in order to obtain a life-saving loan from West Germany. It has high un- and under-employment, strikes, slowdowns and outbursts of violence and sabotage by extreme right-wing factions. Premier Mariano Rumor's cabinet, which fell apart last spring and was propped up, has again fallen. The superannuated Christian Democratic coalition, which has ruled for a quarter century, shows signs of splitting under pressure from the Communists, who are gaining in strength and whose demands for a share of the power may, if fulfilled, provoke a reaction from fascist groups of the kind that flourished under Mussolini. And yet the Italians I have seen tend to minimize the gravity of the situation with the old joke that it is desperate but not serious. Some, pointing to Germany's financial rescue operation, are convinced that the European community will not let them sink. Others believe that if the worst comes they will be bailed out by the US as they have been before. Still others are persuaded that they will survive because, as one editor put it to me, "we always do."

I pretend to no definitive judgment, but here in Rome I observed nothing to suggest that the country is near the brink of disaster. Even Naples, which is said to be the most impoverished place in Italy, seems lively. The most obvious symbol of prosperity in these cities is the automobile. When I first visited Italy in the dismal aftermath of World War II nearly three decades ago, the bicycle represented a measure of affluence; its importance was dramatized in the celebrated Rossellini film. Then, a few years later, the Italians invented the motor scooter which became ubiquitous. On this trip I have not seen a single Vespa or Lambretta, but the streets are strangled by traffic so horrendous that at certain hours movement is virtually paralyzed as temperamental drivers, raising the most fearful racket with their horns, seek to extricate themselves from the tangle. And all this at the equivalent of two dollars per gallon of gasoline. Spaghetti is expensive as a result of the high cost of imported durum wheat, but restaurants are crowded. Foodstores appear to be thriving despite meat, fish and vegetable prices that would shock an American housewife. When I ask how Italians make ends meet, I am told that they spend relatively little on rent or clothing, that they save nothing, that they somehow manage. . . .

Still the economic crisis is genuine, and it is, oddly enough, a consequence of Italy's phenomenal boom. During the immediate postwar period, spurred by some $3.5 billion in US aid, the country embarked on programs that achieved one of the world's most impressive growth rates. This growth, which averaged almost six percent annually between 1951 and 1971, was stimulated by the government's break-up of traditional Italian industrial monopolies and, among other things, by Fiat's decision to manufacture small cars for the mass market instead of turning out luxury items for the carriage trade. Although this boom was made possible in its early stage by cheap labor, wages soon shot up and eventually, with consumer demand outstripping production, inflation began to spiral. At the same time the unbridled industrial push was eating up more raw material imports than Italy could pay for with exports, and this gap, which widened to canyon proportions when the Arabs quadrupled the price of oil, left the country with a trade deficit of about $13 billion last year. Rather than curb output or draw on their gold or foreign currency stocks, the Italian leaders borrowed heavily abroad. But their balance of payments problem continued to deteriorate until last month, when West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt stepped in with a two billion dollar loan. The loan was by no means a charitable gesture, since the Germans can keep the gold collateral if the debt is not repaid within two years. Meanwhile they will receive from Italy the same interest rate they would have got from US Treasury bonds. Most experts here submit that this money merely gives the Italians a breathing space in which to impose austerity policies, and could, like earlier loans, be dissipated quickly unless such policies are made effective.

A motive that surely must have prompted the Germans to intervene was their estimation that a bankrupt Italy would have fallen to the Communists, who started as early as two years ago to signal their interest in participating in the government. Reviving Togliatti's thesis of "historic compromise," the Italian Com-

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munist leader Enrico Berlinguer asserted at that time that the party would not challenge Italy's membership in the European Common Market, and, consistent with that moderate line, he made it clear for the first time that he was prepared to join the ruling coalition rather than stay in opposition. Since then the Communists have repeated that theme, and last month one of their spokesmen even assured the US that the party would not undermine Italy's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization if it played a role in the government. Suggesting that the US ought to prefer "economic and political efficiency and security" to an Italy threatened by instability, the spokesman implied that the Communists could, through their control of the largest trade union and their popularity in the industrial areas, enforce labor discipline and thereby strengthen economic production. Another Communist leader, Carlo Galluzi, stressed the same argument more bluntly the other day when he wrote in *L'Unita*, the party newspaper, that "Italy's economic crisis cannot be solved without the Communists . . . whether they are formally inside or outside the government."

That argument appeals to senior Christian Democrats like Ciriaco de Mita, the Minister of Industry, who thinks that responsibility will make the Communists even more "revisionist" than they are now. It also appeals to middle-class Italians who are fed up with the *immobilisme* of the Christian Democrats, a feeling they registered not long ago when they set back the government by voting to legalize divorce in a nationwide referendum. The Communists played an important role in mobilizing the country on that referendum and in the process revealed their strength. They are intelligent, supple and attuned to the national mood. They have defied the Russians on several occasions, most notably during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, thereby demonstrating that they are not stooges of Moscow. In the eyes of many Italians, they are a constitutional party rather than a revolutionary movement. Indeed the Communist labor union is far less militant than its Catholic counterpart. The Communists are strong, too, because they have managed to mobilize a vast array of ancillary institutions such as marketing cooperatives, women's associations, sports clubs and the like. There is a Tammany Hall quality about these institutions. They are part of an effective political machine, and at the same time they provide citizens with services that government is often unable to dispense. To a significant extent the Communists are a parallel government, and in this respect their influence is as pervasive as that of their main competitor, the Catholic Church.

But the Communists' effort to gain respectability has it adversaries among many workers and students, who, frustrated by Italy's decaying political, social and educational systems, want authentic radicalism. Inspired by the victory of the radicals in Portugal, these elements argue that the Communists ought to topple the enfeebled Christian Democrats rather than coalesce with them, and they are currently trying to organize a variety of extreme leftists into a new movement known as the *Partito di Unita Proletaria per il Communismo* (PDUP). The speculation here is that this movement will set itself up as the opposition in the event that the old-line Communists collaborate with the Christian Democrats. Cooperation with the Communists is anathema as well to the Christian Democratic regulars, some of whom contend that the common front is a Moscow plot. They point out that the latest Communist bid to join the government coincided with Greece's military withdrawal from NATO, which has put Italy in the front line of the Atlantic alliance's Mediterranean flank, thus making it vulnerable to "neutralization from within." Those who are worried by the idea of Communist participation in the government predictably stress that the Communists have not abandoned their long-range objective of turning Italy into a Marxist state and are reformists for tactical reasons. It is also argued that, with the Communists surfacing as the principal power in Portugal and returning as well to open political life in Greece, the Mediterranean can no longer be considered a secure NATO lake. Nevertheless I have not sensed any undue alarm among US diplomats here, though some local newspapers allege that the Central Intelligence Agency, which has a long record of undercover activity in this country, has been subsidizing the Italian secret police to provoke both left-wing and rightist actions in order to justify crackdowns. Much publicity has also been given to Secretary of State Kissinger's recent remark to congressional leaders that the US would be criticized if the CIA did not undertake covert moves to save Italy from "going Communist." It should be added that the revelations of CIA efforts to undermine the Allende government in Chile have created the impression, not only here in Italy but throughout Europe, that the US is prepared to intervene to halt leftist trends.

"We talk about things in order not to do them," an Italian journalist quipped the other day. The comment is relevant to the question of whether the Communists really want a government role, or whether their palaver is merely a political dodge. Those who hold the latter view claim that the Communists are bluffing because, first, they must know that once in the government, they would be saddled with responsibility for the deplorable economic situation, and secondly, they would risk triggering right-wing terrorism of the sort that has already erupted in Brescia and Bologna. My guess is that they would join or at least back the government if their bluff is called, and if that happens I would hope that Washington not repeat its Chilean performance here—in part because that is what the Communists expect.

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Stanley Kauffmann on theater

Two Revivals

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (Anta). This production, 19 years after the première, confirms that Tennessee Williams is one of the two American dramatists of enduring substance and that this is not one of his best plays. The other man, obviously, is O'Neill, and his later plays are well above Williams; still *A Streetcar Named Desire* is truly an American tragedy and *The Glass Menagerie* stands, even if a bit unsteadily, as one of the few successful poems in our theater. *Cat* is significantly less than either.

It came after the two best plays in Williams' very prolific career, and it's among the first in a series that, though laced with fire, nevertheless declines toward a mere rehash like *Small Craft Warnings* and a feeble protest against its author's sterility like *Out Cry*. To say that Williams' career describes an arc is too neat. For one thing it isn't over; for another such plays as *Period of Adjustment* and *The Gnädiges Fräulein* show a largely untapped spring of humor in him. But nothing since *Streetcar* (1947) has so beautifully fused the elements of the Williams "mainstream" in so beautiful a form.

Cat deals with that mainstream. This means, on the surface or near it, such matters as loneliness, buried and released violence, sex and "difference"—the last often signified by physical difference, like lame Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* and injured Brick here. More deeply, Williams has been concerned with American change, with the extension of the Civil War by other means, with the course of our history as we have moved from a 19th-century society of adventure and idealism circumscribed by puritanism to a 20th-century society that is increasingly liberated and increasingly devoid of appetite for adventure or ideal. Fundamentally *Streetcar* is about the end of a romantic America that had rot under the romance, and the onslaught of a brass-and-beer America that has mere bareness where the rot used to be. *Cat*, taking another tack on the same theme, deals with questions of continuity, with death and birth. The play asks: isn't death, as much as sex, a prerequisite of birth?

Big Daddy, a 19th-century figure, built his 28,000-acre plantation with guts and drive (on a start given him by two homosexual planters!). Now he has cancer. The grim news is first sugar-coated, then delivered full. (The romance of circumlocution makes the truth worse when it comes, makes gentility seem mendacious.) His favorite son, Brick, is a former athlete who became a sports announcer, then a drunk. (An actor become spectator, then not even a spectator.) Brick broke his ankle the night before the play begins, fooling on a playing field while drunk, and has become a drunk because of the specter of homosexuality. And his drunkenness puts in question his inheritance of his father's fortune which, in one sense, was *founded* on homosexuality. Brick's wife Margaret, Maggie the Cat, unintentionally helped to confirm the fear of homosexuality in his former football pal, now dead of drink. Brick is punishing her by refusing to sleep with her—a punishment that quite clearly relieves him of unwanted obligation. But Gooper, Brick's busy lawyer brother, has lots of children; Gooper is ready and anxious to inherit from Big Daddy. Brick, whom Daddy prefers, is not only childless but indifferent.

The main action of the play is Margaret's struggle to bring Brick back to her bed, which occupies the center of the stage. She will be, if she can, the nexus between past and future, between Big Daddy's full-blooded past and the future, between Brick's once-high spirits (symbolized by his feeling for sports) and their possible revival.

Female fecundity thus becomes the essential element in the continuity of the past, but (as in *Streetcar*) it is harassed by the puritanism of the past. Some sorts of death—including the death of Brick's friend and the death of Brick's disguised guilt about him—are essential before Margaret can give birth. If Brick can be brought to Margaret's bed, there is a chance for a future better than Gooper's, more humane—if less forceful—than Big Daddy's past, a future relieved of some puritanical spasm. A German friend who saw this revival with me called it a dated chapter in peculiarly American history. It's dated as far as the sheerly theatrical impact of Brick's latent homosexuality is concerned: that subject has become common theater and film fare in the last eight years. But the psychic drama of Brick in his society's transition is still very valid.

If only Williams had realized the play sketched above. But his articulation of these themes is clumsy. Much of the first act is laborious exposition, cramming us with facts while pretending not to know that we are there. And it's particularly tortuous because Brick is mostly restricted to cynical taciturnity and bourbon-pouring; thus a huge burden falls on Margaret. Brick's little nephews and nieces, the "no-neck monsters," are cartoons; their parents, Gooper and Mae, are barely two-dimensional; Big Mama is not much more; the preacher is out of a revue sketch. Notoriously there are two third acts: Williams revised his own third act to please the first director, Elia Kazan. He brought Big Daddy back on stage as he had not intended to do, and he gave Brick and Margaret a last scene that promises procreation. This production uses a version of the revised version. Big Daddy comes back in, principally to tell a long joke that wasn't new in 1955; but the happy ending has been tempered somewhat by keeping the couple out of bed and by adding a few final ambiguous lines from the original version. But no matter how you slice these versions, it's still a weak act. The best scene in the play is the long one in Act Two between Big Daddy and Brick, but that scene is all revelation and explora-

(continued on page 33)

Films Worth Seeing

Amarcord. Fellini's exquisite memoir of an Italian town, mid-'30s. Two and one-quarter lyric hours, poignant, funny and lovely.

Chinatown. Polanski eyes the private eye of the '30s, in Hollywood. Too long and *too* clever but out of the ordinary.

Claudine. Comedy-romance in Harlem today. James Earl Jones and Diahann Carroll charming as mature lovers.

Harry and Tonto. Comedy of romance in a different sense. Old man (and his cat, I'm afraid) sets out to see America. Minor but much better than it sounds.

SK

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Endlessly Honest Confession

Something Happened by Joseph Heller

(Knopf; $10; $20 signed, boxed)

Joseph Heller's new book is exhaustive and exhausting, a major contemporary novel. It maintains him in the first rank of American writers, in the niche he never abandoned after *Catch-22*, but which skeptics were denying him, thinking him a one-book phenomenon. It's been 13 years since *Catch-22* was published, but it was a worthy gestation period if *Something Happened* is the result. If it had turned out to be a mediocre work, Heller would have been kicked to death by the grasshoppers. But he leaps over multiple heads, let's name no names, primarily because of the scope of the new book and the endlessly fascinating monologue he puts into the mouth of his main character, a son of a bitch named Bob Slocum, a contemporary corporate cipher, a man incapable of producing *Something Happened* or anything so meaningful, but out of whose mouth it all rolls. The book is 569 pages long. I was often bored and exasperated by it, the way we are bored by so many of our unpleasant friends. But I would have kept reading for as long as he kept talking, the way we keep listening to those same awful people spill out their trouble and bile. The fascination of the abominator.

Bob Slocum is no true friend of anybody's. He is a woefully lost figure with a profound emptiness, a sad, absurd, vicious, grasping, climbing, womanizing, cowardly, sadistic, groveling, loving, yearning, anxious, fearful victim of the indecipherable, indescribable malady of being born human. Heller goes the Beckett route (the novels) in creating Slocum. The book is a monologue with remembered dialogue, almost static in terms of time, but with some progressions eventually. It reads like a self-analysis and memoir dictated nonstop over a few weeks, but it covers a longer, not-quite definable span in which Slocum has a family disaster at about the same time he is promoted in his job and gets to do what he wants most to do in life: make a three-minute speech at the company's convention in Puerto Rico. His former boss, Jack Green, vicious and sadistic but without Slocum's redeeming weaknesses, has denied him the chance to make the speech in previous years. But when Slocum is promoted and succeeds his best friend in the company, Andy Kagle, whose lame leg Slocum wants to kick and whom he immediately betrays, he has power independent of Green's and he makes his speech. Nobody remembers what he said.

The speech is the metaphor for everybody's immediate, pressing but meaningless goal, the way the company is the framework for the society we live in, the way the combat group in *Catch-22* was the framework of the war society. Heller is a big metaphor man.

Slocum has a sizable metaphorical family also, an aging, unlovable wife, an insecure and nasty 16-year-old daughter whose shins he wants to kick, an idiot son he is sick of and would like to unload, another son, aged nine, who is the principal joy of his life and whom he ruins by allowing the company's values (get to the top, don't give your money away, compete, compete) to smother the boy's wondrously selfless and noncompetitive good nature.

Slocum also has a mother whom he refused to bring into his home when she got old and feeble ("You're no good," were her last words to him), a

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father who died young and whom he yearns to have known, 23 girls he periodically screws, a special mistress of long standing whose abortions he pays for whether he's been responsible or not.

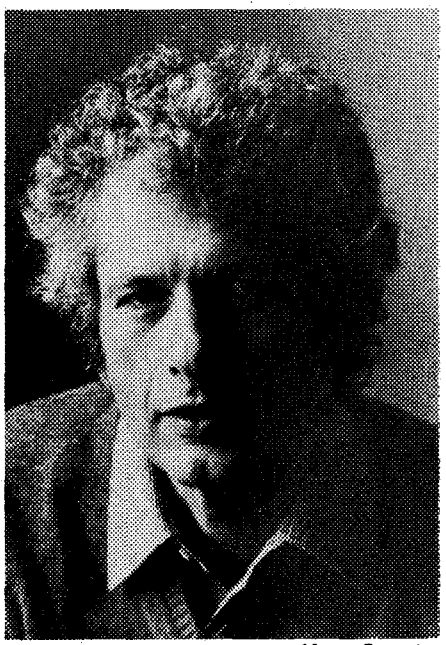
He also, and most remarkably of all, has the ever-fresh memory of the 21-year-old secretary he knew when he was 17. Her name was Virginia Markowitz and she gassed herself while he was in service during the war. They used to talk dirty to each other and love each other in a frustrating way, meeting furtively and frantically for neurotically (her neurosis) brief sexual gropings in the stockroom or a back staircase at an automobile casualty company. That company was where Bobby Slocum was introduced to corporate life and values in the technological age, also to sexuality and sexual craziness, to desire, and to the chief delusion of innocence: the belief that what we want so badly now will come to pass one of these days. The days of innocence are the time of his life Slocum most fondly remembers, now that everything has come so anticlimactically to pass; everything, that is, except Virginia, whom he never made. Her name is the name of his virginity, not hers.

What he wants now is to want something the way he once wanted Virginia. "Is this really the most I can get from the few years left in this one life of mine?" The answer is yes. His job has no meaning that can nourish a man. He can't find romance anymore. When he says things can't get better for him and his wife he means not that things are great but that the low ceiling on their happiness will probably only get lower. He talks of divorce and imagines his wife's suicide; but he can't leave her.

He loved his wife. She was pretty and vital but now she drinks during the day and flirts embarrassingly at parties. We change, Slocum says, and we don't know how to change back. Sad. Why can't some things other than stone remain always as they used to be, he wonders. Sad. What happened is that something happened. To everybody; and Slocum knows how it is now, but he spends the whole book trying to recreate what was and what is, speculating endlessly on what caused the ruin of such glorious innocence, such exciting desire. He has no more desire, only a stale, processed lust.

The book is a baring of what Heller thinks is everybody's soul, at least everybody who shares the values of the corporate state, the company scramble, the family debacle. It will be a rare man anywhere, but especially in America, who doesn't see something of his own soul in Slocum's disastrously honest confession. Egocentric, selfish, cruel, conniving, obsequious, hypocritical and cravenly intelligent, intermittently likeable, he never spares himself in his tirade against the unfathomably dispiriting condition of his life. "I wish I were part of a large family circle and enjoyed it. I would like to fit in. I wish I believed in God."

He admits he has adjusted "contemptibly" to his culture, environment, past. He knows he's a cheap egotist. "I find it harder and harder to feel sorry for anyone but myself," he says. "My wife is stronger than I am, and better, too," he says, "but I must never let her find that out." He admits he wants to be rid of her before her health fails.



Nancy Crampton

As to the company everyone there fears everyone else. "In my department," he says, "there are six people who are afraid of me and one small secretary who is afraid of all of us. I have one other person working for me who is not afraid of anyone, not even me, and I would fire him quickly, but I'm afraid of him."

Call reports are meaningless but must be filed by the staff. Andy Kagle is demoted because his name is only half right. Andrew is okay, but Kagle? Also his clothes are wrong. "He shows poor judgment in colors and styles as well as fabrics . . . He moves to madras and paisley months after others have gone to linen or hopsack . . . ." Also, and most unforgivably, he wears "terrible brown shoes with *fleur de lis* perforations." Says Slocum: "Kagle has ability and experience, but they don't count anymore. What does count is that he has no tone . . . I suspect it is no longer in his power (if it ever was in his power) to change himself to everyone's satisfaction."

Heller voluminously details Slocum's attitudes on everything: whores, underwear, the female and male sex organs, divorce, men's garters, his wife's bad breath, his fear of death and aging, teenage drug habits, money ("I love money better than ice cream," Slocum's daughter says), jocks and faggots, incest and oedipal frenzy, the fear of losing as the key to so much trouble in the world. Slocum on America:

> *I am a broken waterlogged branch floating with my own crowd in this one nation of ours . . . with liberty and justice for all who are speedy enough to seize them first and hog them away from the rest. Some melting pot. If all of us in this vast, fabulous land of ours could come together and take time to exchange a few words with our neighbors and fellow countrymen, those words would be Bastard! Wop! Nigger! Whitey! Kike! Spic!*

Perceiving decently, his actions are usually mean and obscene.

There is no way to sum up all Heller has put into this book. It is as rich in wit, social and psychological insight, American irony and memorable conversations as it is devoid of story, plot structure, tidy continuity and other accoutrements of the conventional novel. His chief stylistic tool is repetition. The Virginia Markowitz story, for instance, he seems to tell a dozen, maybe two or three dozen times. I lost count. But every retelling is from a different angle of memory, with another nuance. The accumulation makes the relationship between Bobby and Virginia a remarkably original fictional creation. It is peculiarly Heller's and it echoes the repetition that gave *Catch-22* such an original tone.

The new book will doubtlessly be compared to *Catch-22*. The double-bladed wit so peculiar to Heller ("She wants me to tell her I love her. I won't. A reason I won't is that I know she wants me to") is here, but this work is so unlike the first that similarities are important only because of their irrelevance.

Heller has learned from Beckett,

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Camus, Kafka, but he is clearly himself, a novelist who will be looked upon as one of the world's most interesting writers. His next work may be greeted with fireworks.

William Kennedy

William Kennedy, *author of* The Ink Truck *(Crown), has finished a new novel. He was book editor of* Look.

The Poverty of The Sayable

Eight Contemporary Poets by Calvin Bedient

(Oxford University Press; $11.95)

One of the curious twists of recent literary history is that after 50 years of rapprochement—years during which it was difficult to define "British" as distinct from "American" poetry—we have come back, in the last decade or so, to a renewed divergence. The great early modernists—Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Auden—transcended national boundaries: anyone writing poetry in English obviously had to take these poets into account. In the early '50s Dylan Thomas became the archetypal poet-hero of young Americans; in the later '50s Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes quite literally made a marriage between American and British poetry, absorbing, at least for a time, the same influences and domesticating the same myths.

Plath and Hughes separated in 1962 some months before her suicide. This private event has nothing whatever to do with the poetry of Philip Larkin or Donald Davie, but we may take it as a kind of symbolic turning point. In the '60s the two poetries increasingly went their separate ways, and today it would be fair to say that American poetry has less in common with its British counterpart than with the poetry of Latin America or of Eastern Europe.

What, then, is contemporary British poetry like? Calvin Bedient's *Eight Contemporary Poets* gives us a superb account of its central features, although, as I shall argue later, the total picture that emerges is rather less complementary than Bedient suggests it will be in his introduction. Bedient's eight poets do not form a school or movement; the English, as he notes, "*will* go their own way." Nevertheless they share a "*sceptical* energy," a tough resiliency in the face of "a world truncated in possibilities, cramped metaphysically and politically, just too large for despair and too shut down for confident hope or trusting joy." Thus Philip Larkin characteristically mourns "a world without generative fire," but this is not to say that his poetry is merely cold and dry. Bedient calls him a "neighborly snowman," one who transcends nihilism and boredom in his creation of "an imaginative bareness, a penetrating confession of poverty." His special gift is to find "poetry and humour even in sterility"; he takes "the brute force of circumstantial evidence" and manages to endow it with the authenticity of felt experience. Larkin's style may look artless, but his blunt, clipped syntax and his insistence on a traditional verse form so transparent that it forces the reader to concentrate on the content itself, work together to create an "eloquent taciturnity."

But Bedient refuses to romanticize his subject. He knows only too well that Larkin's "dogged parochialism" reflects the "shrunken will of the nation," that there is, in fact, something very limited about this plain, matter-of-fact, Hardyesque poetry. When Larkin tries to go beyond the literal, he tends to give us a "swaying rope bridge of tropes, dramatic but ill-supported." "No Road" is an example, and even the well known anthology piece, "Church Going," notable for its pungent, down-to-earth detail, lapses, in the middle stanzas, into self-conscious symbolism and gratuitous moral speculation. Indeed, Bedient concludes, Larkin "is only poised and intelligent with particulars—abstractions tend to spill out of his hands."

An exquisite poet, then, but a limited one. Bedient finds similar limitations in the work of Charles Tomlinson and Donald Davie. Tomlinson's great originality, he argues, lies in the "apparent incongruity" between "the opulence of the visual world" he presents and the strict, chaste temperament that contemplates it. But this delicate tension between concrete surface and abstract feeling is sometimes destroyed by an excess of doctrine, and in Tomlinson's most recent poetry, "the *display* of contemplation is sometimes more apparent than its joy," asserted rather than felt.

Davie's case is somewhat different. Here is a brilliant critic, Bedient argues, who writes good poetry only when he escapes from his own theory that the central virtues of poetry are "urbanity . . . moderation, sobriety, proportion, right reason." This insistence on the Augustan virtues has produced poems like Davie's early "Portrait of the Artist as a Farmyard Fowl":

A conscious carriage must become a strut;
Fastidiousness can only stalk
And seem at last not even tasteful but
A ruffled hen too apt to squawk.

Of this witty quatrain Bedient writes: "Davie is here so disinclined to make of his poem a new experience . . . that he can only point to the real world as one gives directions to a stranger—it is 'over there' from him. . . ." This is, in fact, "not poetry, but versified prose discourse—in brief, *verse*." Yet when Davie forgets his stated poetic aims he combines elegant formality with an imagist penchant for clear visual images, as in "Pietà," which begins: "Snow-white ray/coal-black earth will /swallow now./The heaven glows/when twilight has/kissed it, but/your white face/which I kiss now does/not." Davie is at his best, Bedient argues, when he allows his sensibility to overrride his intellectual convictions about poetry, when he follows his natural instinct to enhance life rather than to organize or rectify existence.

The remaining essays are similarly valuable in defining a given poet's style and in discriminating what is authentically poetic from what is second-rate. R. S. Thomas is praised for his "sensory firmness," his "passionate naturalness," but Bedient finds, with some justification, that metaphor is too prominent, too overripe in Thomas' poems. The brilliant essay on Ted Hughes focuses on the problem of voice, the poet's relation to his own themes. Although Bedient perhaps underrates Hughes' first volume, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), and overrates the second, *Lupercal* (1960), he argues convincingly that the early poems "seem dreadfully knowing without displaying the least real knowledge of life," that their tone is too frequently one of "sniggering voyeurism." In the *Crow* poems (1971), on the other hand, "energy has largely dwindled to a nagging thing of the voice." As exper-

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iences these poems "are no more dramatic than . . . Disney cartoons." Yet the book has its own peculiar virtues: its talk "is so pell-mell, so bizarre, so knowingly black, that the reader cannot help but attend." Individual *Crow* poems all too often display a "murky profundity," but their effect is cumulative: the whole, as Bedient shows, is greater than the sum of its parts.

American readers will be particularly interested in the essays on Stevie Smith and W. S. Graham, two poets who have received little recognition outside Britain. Stevie Smith emerges as a sort of female Douanier Rousseau of lyric verse. Her nursery rhyme meters, "naive, obliging exactitude," and "delightfully stolid" tone conspire to create such enchanting fantasy poems as "The Frog Prince" and "The Lady of the Well-Spring." She is an eccentric, wholly *charming* (in the literal sense of the word) poet. W. S. Graham has a similarly "elfin touch." Bedient calls him "the most piquantly original poet now writing in English." "His homely, awkward style is . . . an ugly duckling . . . With its roughly cut angles and raw surfaces, it is like a handcarved wooden bowl that is *meant* to look handmade." Graham's best poems have the quality of found art.

Bedient's eight essays reveal him to be one of the finest critics of contemporary poetry. In an age when poetry reviewing has become increasingly schizophrenic (the poets reviewing one another's work generally engaged in a back-slapping operation, while, on the other side of the fence, the academics stand back, reluctant to make a judgment), Bedient is one of the rare critics who is willing to take a stand, to commit himself. His methodology will strike some readers as unnecessarily eclectic: he is now the formalist, now the phenomenologist, now the impressionist recording his own quirky responses to a given text. But in Bedient's case such eclecticism may be a virtue: it enables him to use whatever method *works* in illuminating the poetry in question.

The book's only real flaw is that Bedient wholly undercuts the stated thesis of his introduction. He calls the '60s a "remarkable decade" and asserts that "Postwar poetry in Britain . . . has proved increasingly robust, varied, responsive to the times, felicitous, enjoyable." And because each poet is willing to go his own way "poetry in Britain and Ireland is now more modernist than ever." But nothing in the study itself convinces the reader that this is the case. Generally speaking Bedient finds more to blame than to praise in the work of his chosen poets. Thus W. S. Graham has, in his recent poetry, "lost confidence in his words," and Thomas Kinsella's *New Poems* (1973) "reveals . . . that the death of the will to order is . . . likely . . . to lead to washed-out, unwilling writing."

Indeed far from convincing us that contemporary British poetry is "robust" and "remarkable," Bedient paints a rather dispiriting—though, I would say, wholly accurate—picture of the current scene. His eight poets emerge as interesting, sympathetic figures, as talented, cultured practitioners of verse, some of them admirably modest, some charmingly eccentric. Their poetry has everything but energy and excitement, passion and power. One wonders about the larger issues involved: why has British poetry become so markedly conservative at a time when the poetry of most nations is becoming increasingly defiant and experimental? How do we relate the careful measures of Davie or Larkin or the polished diction of Tomlinson to, say, concrete poetry and neo-surrealism? How do we "place" contemporary British poetry against the background of the American or European achievement? These are tantalizing questions but perhaps I am merely anticipating Bedient's next book.

Marjorie Perloff

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Looking Backward

Versions of the Past: The Historical Imagination in American Fiction
by Harry B. Henderson III

(Oxford; $12.50)

Because historical fiction has been a kind of half-breed genre—history without the authority of everything having actually happened, fiction that must use "real life" events to give it importance—it has come in for very little serious theoretical analysis in English. Those who have described it have pretty much judged it in accordance with how accurately it reproduces known events, as if historical fiction were no more than a game-playing flight of fancy in which the novelist shows how cleverly he can mix in the fiction without distorting the history.

This book is not of that sort. Harry Henderson, a young scholar who died before his book could be published, set out to show how the American novelist came to grips *as novelist* with the problem of the past, the assumption being that he was not merely engaged in prettifying history with imaginary characters but using the sharp focus of the artistic imagination to perceive the past in a way that literature might uniquely do.

There are, Henderson begins, two ways whereby the past may be seen. The view can be idealistic, or progressive, in which case the idea of history is to portray the way in which changes have been made in past society by and through men, whose human nature is constant from age to age. Or it can be holistic, wherein each historical period is seen as unique, comprising an inviolable social entity within itself, and not susceptible to measurement by standards of human conduct other than its own.

He then proceeds to apply this scheme to representative major works of American historical fiction, from Fenimore Cooper to Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* and Pynchon's *V*, in terms of the way the tension between such mutually contradictory views of history has made itself felt in interpretations of the American past. He also, and I think illogically, includes novels by Ralph Ellison and Norman Mailer which, though not set in the past, are informed by the au-

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thors' historical imagination.

The difficulty with the idealistic viewpoint, he notes, is that by its assumption of an ongoing, developing truth toward which all times and places must move, it is forced to depict its heroes as men whose individual capacities are finally irrelevant in the face of the force of progress whose instruments they are. This doesn't make for very good tragic resolution.

On the other hand, the holistic approach too easily results in a relativistic antiquarianism that centers upon the way that its protagonists are representative; to the extent that they bring about change, they must do violence to social order and produce catastrophe. This tends to make heroes into renegades, brigands and castaways.

As might be expected with such assumptions on the author's part, Mr. Henderson's chapter on *The Scarlet Letter* is one of his best. Critics have long noted the way in which Hawthorne's loyalties are caught between the dynamic force of Puritan Boston, dependent as it is on social conformity and the acceptance of a community role by all; and the progressive idealism involved in Hester Prynne's wish to be herself. Henderson identifies the workings of the central characters within such a transaction; Dimmesdale is anguished role-seeker, Chillingworth is consummate role-player using the social modes for his own ends, and Hester is alienated "enthusiast" who would walk to the beat of a different kind of drummer entirely.

It is with William Faulkner's great historical novel *Absalom, Absalom!* that Henderson is most concerned. Not only does Faulkner develop the tension between the holistic view—the Old South as a cultural entity and Thomas Sutpen as role-seeking innocent—and the progressive view—the terrible decision that Henry Sutpen must make; he also, in the dialectic between Shreve McCannon and Quentin Compson, provides an inquiry into the nature of historical understanding.

The tortured quest of Quentin to understand why Henry Sutpen killed his half-brother is the search for Quentin's own relationship to his past, and his insistence that race is the ultimate explanation is seen by Henderson as the taking onto himself of the historical burden. He rejects Shreve's half-flippant prediction of ultimate miscegenation as the only solution to the historical dilemma, thus enforcing "the web of holistic tragedy instead of . . . the pro-

We'd like to raise his allowance... to 75¢ worth of food a day.

What's happening to this boy—and thousands like him in the rural South today—is hard to believe. As a white Southern doctor reported to a U.S. Senate committee: "*Malnutrition* isn't quite what we found. The boys and girls were hungry, weak, in pain, sick—suffering from hunger and disease and, directly or indirectly, they are dying from them—which is exactly what *starvation* means.'

Doesn't the government take care of that? Not quite. There's the hot lunch program in the schools . . . but in Alabama some kids only *get* to school on days when it rains too hard to work the fields. And there's the Food Stamp Program . . . but a lot of people living on fatback, field peas and biscuits never heard of it, and some that *have* just can't squeeze the cash to buy stamps out of a Mississippi welfare check that gives a widow $60 a *month* to house, clothe *and* feed four hungry children.

That's why the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund was started. Through it, $10 in hard cash can be converted into as much as $170 worth of Food Stamps by a volunteer NAACP worker who goes down the back roads and dirt tracks of the 'secret South' to find and feed the starving kids that America never sees.

But they can only do the job if *you* supply the cash. Whatever you choose to give is tax-deductible. And whatever you *can* give is desperately needed. Not just by skinny kids and hungry kids. By *starving* kids.

NAACP Emergency Relief Fund
Dept. E10
Box 121, Radio City Station
New York, N.Y. 10019

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gressive key to the nightmare's end." So when Shreve asks him finally why he hates the South, he can only insist, in outrage and in despair, that he doesn't.

It is an interesting reading. If it seems too abstract we must keep in mind that Henderson is not purporting to identify the nature of the tragedy itself. He is attempting to show the imaginative assumptions about the nature of history that lie behind it.

Even so, I come away from Henderson's book both grateful for the insight he has offered and a bit uneasy. We don't know exactly what to do when we set out to try to get at the dynamics of historical fiction, and Henderson's formulation contains much of merit. Yet there is more to the business than is here conceived. I don't quite trust the deductive method used; there is something about Henderson's division of ways of viewing the past as either holistic or progressive (even though he is careful to say that any good novel must have something of both) that is too neat. It sidesteps too much of the anguish; merely to designate the contradictory element as "tension" doesn't sufficiently allow for the passion and energy involved therein, and too much of the art resides in the passion itself.

Put it this way: when Quentin Compson tells Shreve McCannon that he doesn't hate the South, it is not merely a refusal or inability to accept a key to historical liberation that is involved. It is also the rejection of a way of thinking and of formulating problems that cannot deal with Quentin's full experience of being human.

Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

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Recent, Notable Fiction

The Camberwell Beauty and other stories by V. S. Pritchett

(Random House; $6.95)

Let the high-minded avert their eyes. V. S. Pritchett traffics in pleasure, delightedly, delightfully and scrupulously: what is promised is performed, which is a rare thing nowadays in either life or literature, and the mark of the master is unmistakable in each of these stories. Pritchett made clear his own attitude toward the art in the preface he provided in 1956 for *The Sailor, Sense of Humour, and Other Stories,* and nothing in the new collection would suggest that he has significantly modified it:

> *For one, like myself, who has laboriously scattered his time in the writing of novels, literary criticism, and books of travel, the practice of the short story has been the delightful and compensating art and the only kind of writing that has given me great pleasure.*

Of course a writer can enjoy himself while writing and still stupefy his readers by the pretension and sheer ineptitude of what he writes. With Pritchett it is otherwise. The pleasure he takes in writing translates itself into the pleasure one takes in reading him—the opportunity to acquaint oneself with a temperament that is humane, an intelligence that is acute and a technique that is masterly.

He has a supernal responsiveness to the eccentricity of ordinary life. Never conceiving of the story as a form of disguised autobiography or confession, he is never present as himself: "How many disguises," he said in the 1956 preface, "the narrating 'I' is made to assume; how unfailingly, when the first person singular has been myself as I think I am, the story has congested before his tedious and ignorant obstruction, and has not succeeded until he was deleted from it."

Pritchett has a preternaturally sharp eye and ear, alert to the nuances of speech and behavior out of which the stories effortlessly, persuasively, naturally seem to arise. Disguise is too modest and perhaps misleading a way of describing what he achieves. In the title story a young antique dealer tells his tale in the first person, in his own highly idiosyncratic fashion: "August's? On the Bath Road? Twice-five August—of course I know August: ivory man." And it is he telling it, not Pritchett, miming and mimicking the character, rolling his eyes at his own cleverness.

Clever he prodigiously is, but that is the least of it, measured against the empathy and unnerving understanding that reveals itself in every story, whether in the third or first person. Here is the bright excitability that hides loss among the sophisticated unfinished souls of "Did You Invite Me?": "Rachel first met Gilbert at David and Sarah's, or it may have been at Richard and Phoebe's—she could not remember—but she did remember that he stood like a touchy exclamation mark and talked in a shotgun manner about his dog." Or the unsentimental pathos of the old man, one of Pritchett's most memorable figures, in "The Spree," who "knew that if old age vanished in the morning it came on at night, filling the bedroom with people until, switching on the light, he saw it staring at him; then it shuffled off and left him looking at the face of the clock." Or the enchanting gaucherie of the very young man losing his virginity in Paris in "The Diver," a story by a warmer Maupassant—Pritchett, in fact.

For such a writer the anecdote, one suspects, is the seed, the starting point. The story "The Lady from Guatemala" is surely a case in point. The vain bachelor editor, too much troubled by the problems of "suffering humanity" to care about one mere suffering human being, is pursued through the capitals of Europe by a lady poet from Latin America in a trance of infatuation for him. Surely, one thinks, Pritchett has heard the anecdote, couldn't have invented it—though again, perhaps he has—in any event, how wondrously, like Henry James, he has allowed his imagination to play upon it, how delightfully the seed is allowed to flower.

None of these stories is portentous enough to be burdened with the epithet "major." For the time being they are perhaps best summed up as entertainments, in the Graham Greene sense. I would not hesitate to say that this is the

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most entertaining collection of stories to come out of England since Greene's own *May We Borrow Your Husband?* They are worthy of a place in what promises to be one of the major books of our time, the as-yet unfinished *Complete Collected Stories of V. S. Pritchett.*

William Abrahams

William Abrahams, *who edits the O. Henry Prize Stories annual, is the co-author with Peter Stansky of* Journey to the Frontier *and* The Unknown Orwell.

Switch Bitch
by Roald Dahl
(Knopf; $5.95)

Roald Dahl was born in Wales to Norwegian parents, almost 60 years ago. In 1946 he published *Over To You*, a collection of stories about his experiences in the RAF during World War II. Then, in *Someone Like You* (1953) and *Kiss Kiss* (1960), he collected those short stories that have given him a reputation that leads his publisher to bill the author of *Switch Bitch* as "our Supreme Master of Wickedness."

Dahl's characteristic story sets up a quick situation, usually within a family, and ends with the nastiest character taking control or with a victim facing a grim future. A woman discovers that her irritating husband is trapped in the elevator of their home, and goes off to vacation in Paris. Another brains her husband with a frozen leg of lamb and then roasts the evidence. A weird husband has himself reduced to a brain and eye floating in a basin, and the story ends with his wife blowing cigarette smoke in the eye and looking forward to a lifetime of tormenting him. A husband feeds his baby and himself on the royal jelly of bees, with apian results. . . .

One of Dahl's subjects is the war between men and women. Another is the threat of the esoteric, the repeated suggestion that special knowledge is dangerous, or that the man with special knowledge is necessarily nutty. This leads him into lectures on reincarnation, Liszt, cerebral biology, the qualities of royal jelly, the butchering of pigs, the characteristics of antique furniture, and —in *Switch Bitch*— spiders, sexual stimulation and the sense of smell.

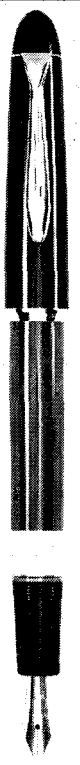
The notion of a war between men and women, with many of the fiercest skirmishes fought inside quiet domestic houses, is traditional. The idea that knowledge is dangerous is an ancient one; an age that has developed the hydrogen bomb, gas and germ warfare, and worldwide pollution of earth, air and water can hardly shrug off the notion of the mad scientist. A country so hung up on and about sex as ours can hardly dismiss the struggle between men and women. These are grimly serious contemporary issues.

Why, then, should anyone want to read stories about them? What is the pleasure in a painful subject? There have been many answers, but the most serious ones are irrelevant to Dahl. Our Supreme Master of Wickedness doesn't know enough about the subject. He is not wicked, not even tempting. In three of the four stories of *Switch Bitch* he's not even titillating, since the villains get their comeuppance. He is no longer willing to leave the reader with a vision of nastiness triumphant. This is reassuring, surely, and perhaps Dahl does what so many authors of thrillers and horror stories do: he substitutes for real and dangerous evil a cartoon version of it, safely incredible or at least safely removed from our everyday lives. We can read about Fu Manchu without fearing Vietnamese tiger cages. We can imagine hostile visitors from flying saucers without fainting when politicians emerge from limousines. And our sense of real human evil is safely numbed when we meet the hero of two of these present stories, Uncle Oswald, who, under various names, has infested gothic literature for centuries (he was a favorite of English playwrights in the 18th century). He is rich, experienced and (therefore) perverse, guaranteed to appear unexpectedly and to disappear predictably, leaving corruption in his wake but no great harm. A scamp, a ne'er-do-well, a rogue, "a celebrated rapscallion," he is in fact a nasty bastard, who "had never in his life been able to confine his attentions to one particular woman for longer than the time it took to conquer her. When that was done, he lost interest and looked around for another victim." This is unpleasant, but Dahl defuses the topic conventionally by insisting on Oswald's amorous skills: "Wherever he went, he left an endless trail of females in his wake, females ruffled and ravished beyond words, but purring like cats."

All four stories here deal with sex, and three show Oswald or his type conquering and then losing out. The losing is new to Dahl's characteristic story, as are the fairly explicit sex and the four-letter words. (Perhaps, like so many writers, he feels that the public demands coarseness now. The title *Switch Bitch* is made forcibly from two titles, "The Great Switcheroo" and "Bitch," and "Bitch" is the quite arbitrary name given an aphrodisiac.) The fourth and by far the best story tells how a rejected suitor drives the woman to suicide. Even in this one, however, we are required to believe that the woman is remarkably stupid. The other stories hinge on the traditional desert mansion full of opulence, beautiful women and a Strange Secret, on a difficult switching of sexual partners, and on an obligatorily aphrodisiac odor. Since we can't believe in these things the evilness in the story is presumably neutralized for us. As *Playboy* neutralizes pornography with an airbrush, so Dahl sweetens nastiness into mild amusement.

J. D. O'Hara

J. D. O'Hara *teaches English at the University of Connecticut, Storrs.*



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Alinsky's Diamond by Tom McHale

(Lippincott; $8.95)

In his third novel Tom McHale has drastically altered the geography of his world but left intact his fascination with the curious and the grotesque, especially in their religious manifestations. *Principato* and *Farragan's Retreat* bore the marks of their Philadelphia origins where the strong ethnic ties and bitter conflicts of Irish and Italians share a common root in the soil of cultural Catholicism. No matter how faint their actual belief, neither Principato nor Farragan can escape their inherited religion, complete with kooky or conniving clerics, ironbound conventions and occasional comforts.

Frank Murphy, McHale's new hero, is an expatriate, an Iowa farm boy married into the minor nobility of France; but as the novel opens, he is swiftly caught up in the bizarre workings of an ostensibly Catholic pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This wildly picaresque element lends an exotic flavor to McHale's already highly spiced religious imagination, but he pays for the gain with a less convincing cast of characters.

The comic extravagances in the earlier novels grew out of a recognizable sense of place. The outrageous things McHale's creations said and did were merely blown-up versions of what we read about in the daily papers. By shifting the locale to France and assorted points between there and Jerusalem, and by introducing the almost mythic title character, Meyer Alinsky, the author has moved further down the road from realism to abstraction and allegory. Ideas have always been present in McHale's fiction—questions about revenge, belief, patriotism—but in *Alinsky's Diamond* the overriding issue of retribution and vicarious sacrifice is central.

McHale's facility at comic invention and his talent for creating a believable and lovable "hero" outweigh the novel's defects. Frank Murphy is a failure in the eyes of his family, and more poignantly, in his own eyes. After an all-too-brief period of success as lover and husband to the lovely Monique de Rastignac and as restorer of the noble family's depleted fortunes, Murphy gets involved in a spectacularly unsuccessful scheme to doctor the estate's wine. The result: 12,000 bottles of an unmarketable vintage, scarcely veiled hatred and contempt from the townfolk who depend on the winery, and a solemn vow (typically McHalean) to drink himself to death by literally swallowing his own mistake.

Salvation comes in the form of an invitation to join an extraordinary walking pilgrimage to Jerusalem, billed as the 14th Crusade. Besides an exit from an intolerable situation in Vardelle-sur-Lac, the caper offers a guaranteed stipend of $40,000. Murphy rushes in but soon has second thoughts when he encounters a series of strong-willed and strong-armed agents of the pilgrimage's organizer, the charismatic and controversial Père Marfeau. Bullied and shamed into going through with the scheme, Murphy finally joins his fellow pilgrims as they make their way across France: a former prostitute (recently miraculously "healed") and her pimp; an unsuccessful doctor turned abortionist; an ambitious French television producer accompanied by a pair of homosexual cameramen; and in sharp contrast, the saintly and eccentric Père Bisson, whose only interest is building an orphanage in his parish.

A bizarre enough beginning; each stage of the journey brings a new revelation of subterranean designs and each attempt at explanation only leads to further questions. Marfeau's religious publicity stunt gives way to an apparent smuggling operation which in turn is replaced by an unlikely theory of retribution for the previous 13 crusades. The last brings Meyer Alinsky onto the stage, and with his appearance the plot takes on a new focus. Fabulously rich, enormously powerful, Alinsky operates in a world of self-created legends, buying and selling political and religious leaders, according to an elaborate chart he has compiled of weak links in the world's organizational hierarchies. Murphy is both fascinated and repelled by him, and Alinsky in turn quickly establishes a special relationship with his fellow Iowan expatriate. When Murphy attempts to escape from the crusade in Greece, Alinsky expands the bond to make Murphy's wife and son "houseguests" in his Jerusalem palace as insurance against the arrival of the pilgrims. To Murphy's dismay, the two grow more and more delighted, not to say infatuated, with their captor.

Apart from these personal traumas Murphy gradually discerns that Alinsky's theory of retribution has a real but far more sinister connection with the pilgrims and their purifying journey than anyone has guessed. Like the ending of *Farragan's Retreat*, McHale's climax and dénouement here require as many corpses as a Jacobean revenge play and as many final twists as an O. Henry short story. Alinsky the manipulator par excellence turns out to have been himself an instrument in a cosmic scheme of atonement. It is left for his valiant mother, Rachel, and Murphy to begin the rebuilding of the world he sought to destroy in his anger and grief.

In creating Frank Murphy, McHale has remained true to previous form; along with Principato and Farragan, Murphy is quintessentially *l'homme moyen sensuel* forced to deal with true believers ("As always, when he was in the company of men who had an intense personal discipline of one sort or another, Murphy felt a consummate shame"). But the apparent strength of the fanatic proves to be both satanic and, in the end, ineffectual. Like Farragan's patriotism-crazed brother and sister, Alinsky becomes the victim of a coolly calculating and totally unsuspected subordinate character. Conversely Murphy's innate skepticism makes him the perfect foil for McHale's darkly comic vision. No one need tell him that the world is absurd. From the moment he unaccountably escaped from the Midwestern tornado that took the rest of his family, Murphy has lived with the blessings and the curses of an irrational Providence. Moving deeper into the monomaniacal world of Meyer Alinsky, Murphy refuses to surrender either his basic common sense or his appreciation of just how awry the universe really is.

Aside from the comedy generated by Murphy and his perceptions, McHale, as we have come to expect, also provides us with a number of very funny set pieces. But as the novel progresses both slapstick and satire give way before an unrelenting and often savage irony. Even more than McHale's earlier novels, *Alinsky's Diamond* is intended as a "serious" comic novel, and in large part it succeeds. My only objection is that the theological issues of guilt and atonement sometimes threaten to swamp the narrative.

John B. Breslin

JOHN BRESLIN *is literary editor of* America.

Correction

The painting by Raphael Soyer of Allen Ginsberg that we published last week should have carried the credit line, photograph courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York.

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Collective Excitement

The Fiction Collective is a group of young writers who have decided to join together in publishing their own novels. They choose one another's manuscripts, edit these, design covers, and then George Braziller distributes them. Obviously these writers care enough about their work to recognize that they *alone* can devote so much time to the collective. They refuse to write best sellers; they dislike yielding to publicity agents and hustling editors—the commercial world of publishing. I admire their determination, enthusiasm and daring.

Twiddledum Twaddledum
by Peter Spielberg
Museum
by B. H. Friedman
Reruns
by Jonathan Baumbach
(The Fiction Collective;
$7.95, $3.95 paper, each)

I also appreciate their talent. These three novels are entertaining and serious works that would in all probability be destroyed by the book business. They have little chance for great popularity because they do not deal with "controversial" themes or "exciting" heroes. It is, in fact, their seemingly unpopular, "negative" qualities that make them so appealing to the serious reader.

Twiddledum Twaddledum deals, as the title indicates, with the dualities of life. It begins with a chapter entitled: "A Mighty Trauma is our Beginning." It ends with one entitled "Upper Berth." The novel is about beginnings and ends, but as the last chapter title implies, ends are merely other beginnings. It is loosely plotted; although we follow the adventures of Pankraz, the hero, as he grows up in Europe and America (becoming Paul and finally Peter Sun), we soon recognize that the plot is simply another fiction, another set of inventions, duplicities and reflections. The novel is, in a way, a comedy directed against "progress"; it attacks the notion that anything—even a straight line marching toward some ultimate end—is stable, fixed, sane.

Pankraz is an identical twin. (His brother dies soon after childbirth.) He is a "murderer" because he does not leave enough "room" for his twin. He is aware of his crime; he consequently goes to extremes of behavior: he refuses to eat or he overeats. Pankraz can never be *at one* with the world.

Although we would expect Peter Spielberg to take the easy way and accept the Freudian determination of character and life-plot, he perceives that such acceptance is meaningless. Life and art are more playful than simple game plans. He attacks psychological axioms by demonstrating their ultimate silliness. His hero is a casebook text, but at the same time he is the opposite, refusing to go along with the "character" given to him.

The novel veers from nightmare to daydream to *fiction about nightmare and dream*. There is no one center, no "final solution" (to use another chapter title). And it is this shrewd flexibility that makes it hard to resist.

Museum, on the other hand, seems at first to be largely conventional. It traces the adventures of rich, middle-aged Emerson Skane III as he confronts the meaning of his father's legacy. But the hero is less conventional than he appears. Although he sits on museum boards, he wonders so much about institutions that he is, finally, as much of a rebel as Pankraz. His wealth and his anti-conventionality make his character especially interesting.

B. H. Friedman's knowledge of art (and the art world) is apparent on every page. He is so comfortable with this environment—he is convincing on board meetings, construction plans for museums, art historians—and with his hero that he gives us an insider's novel.

However Friedman moves beyond mere reportage. He constructs his fiction artfully, demonstrating like Spielberg that life is full of contradictions and duplicities. His style perfectly captures these concerns. Here is the last paragraph of the novel:

> *The black bow tie Em was wearing—another hereditary necklace—felt more comfortable than it had on some previous occasions and not only because here, inside the building, there were so many others like it, a swarm of black nocturnal butterflies . . . Em lifted his hand to his collar to make sure that the tie hadn't actually become undone—it felt that comfortable, that loose—but it was knotted perfectly in place.*

Em (Emerson) is comfortable in the museum because he is able to accept the *ties* to his father (and to the past) as well as to his present attachments. He understands the knots of life, those knots that resemble the institutions he has disliked, and he recognizes that maturity involves compromise. But Em is not restrictive. He fights rigidity of belief by keeping alive his dreams, his flights of imagination that are suggested by the surrealistic "swarm of black nocturnal butterflies." Like his hero Friedman moves from realistic gesture and object—the museum, the black bow tie—to dream-states. His style vibrantly reconciles opposites, implying freedom of movement and response.

The most impressive of the three novels is *Reruns*. Jonathan Baumbach deals with the themes of the other works—the fight against institutions, the search for flexible identity and the significance of heritage—but he carries these toward the "landscape of nightmare" (to use the title of his critical study of contemporary American fiction). The surrealistic quality of his

RICHARD GILMAN

STANLEY KAUFFMANN:
"In its field this is one of the choice books of the century. It moves toward the deepest sources of some great plays, so it deepens their effect on us."

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novel is evident on the very first page as the narrator, who often thinks of himself as "out there" or third person, proclaims that he is "vulnerable to the touch of air."

Baumbach asks important questions: does the individual gain self-knowledge by confronting his popular culture? What exactly is the value of dream (fantasy) in creating identity? Should identity be so flexible that it can adjust to different loves? Baumbach does not solemnly ask these questions; he implies them through his comic, grim treatment of his hero's adventures.

He structures his novel in a brilliant way. He gives us short chapters—32 "nights"—that run from one crazy thing to another. The pace is frenetic, "hyped-up," manic. And within each chapter the sentences (and paragraphs) rush past like flashes of light. Even the characters cannot sit still. They say a line and disappear (or reappear). The total effect is disturbing. Usual routines are destroyed; only explosive energy remains. Here is part of the last chapter:

> *She fired five times. I went down to my knees. There were either no bullets in it or she had missed. "What I wanted to find out," she said, "was if I could, faced with you, pull the trigger. It wasn't hard. Perhaps it would have been harder not to." (My shirt-front was bloody.)*
>
> *She helped me up, arm around me, outside into a waiting Black Pearl cab. The driver was all over wrapped in bandages like Claude Rains in* The Invisible Man.

The confusion, violence, humor and madness are mixed so quickly that we, like the narrator (who becomes a Jack Kennedy?), are overwhelmed or, better yet, *shot*. And it is this sense of sudden attack that creates our identification with the disappearing, vulnerable hero. *We* are forced to *rerun* his life (as he had rerun the lives of movie stars).

The three novels are related thematically, stylistically (less so), but finally they stand alone as independent and resourceful explorations. They should be read.

Irving Malin

IRVING MALIN *teaches at CCNY. He is co-editor of the forthcoming* The Achievement of William Styron *(Georgia University Press).*

Contradictions

In Cuba
by Ernesto Cardenal
(New Directions; $10.50, $3.95 paper)

"I sing a land on the way to being born" was Ernesto Cardenal's poetic salute to his native Nicaragua. *In Cuba* is a tribute in like mood to the society being molded by Fidel Castro since 1959, a society openly committed to Marxism since 1961.

Cardenal claims no expertise as economist or social scientist. He offers observations, reflections, conversations and discussions from two visits to Cuba, one of several months in 1970, the other of a few days—including five hours with Castro—in 1971. As member of a jury for a poetry contest he traveled extensively, met officials, bureaucrats, farmers, poets, priests, hippies, ardent supporters and rabid opponents of the regime. A sensitive interviewer and assiduous note-taker, he had known Cuba as far back as 1957, having stopped there on his way to Gethsemani, Kentucky, to enter the Trappist novitiate then headed by fellow poet and mystic Thomas Merton.

A Roman Catholic priest since 1965 and head of a community of recluses on the lake island of Solentiname, Nicaragua, Cardenal had a double purpose in visiting Cuba. He wanted to evaluate the revolution, and to determine how the church was affected by and responded to it.

He liked the radical social changes affected by the revolution, particularly the elimination of privilege. The ring of slums around Havana and other cities is gone, as are most of the cabins of the rural peasants. Malaria has been eliminated, and polio and gastroenteritis are under control. All Cubans enjoy free medical care. While elsewhere in Latin America the rich-poor gap widens and unemployment mounts, Cuba provides work for all, as well as equal access to food, restaurants, hotels and beach resorts.

Latin America's most widely known living poet, translated into seven European languages, Cardenal is idolized by young intellectuals for the revolutionary militancy that once brought him persecution and jail, and that still breathes through his poetry. It is, he says, part of the poet's calling "to give the lie to AP and UPI." He anticipated that he would be known in Havana's literary circles. But he was amazed at the extent of his fame in Cuba. He discovered that an anthology of his poems had sold 10,000 copies in a week (equivalent to 250,000 in the United States), and that factory workers in remote towns analyzed his work in study sessions. This is one result of the literacy drives that have created a mass market for serious literature. García Marquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude* quickly sold 90,000 copies. In 10 years book production rose from 1.5 million to 12 million copies, with demand still far outstripping supply.

Unlike René Dumont, the European socialist and longtime friend of Castro who had grown disillusioned by 1970, Cardenal does not think the revolutionary élan is dying. He is impressed by the commitment of the young to the revolution, even when they are frustrated by the pettiness and inadequacy of their elders. He believes that the stress on moral incentives, with which Ché Guevara's name continues to be identified, has been very successful.

He agrees, nevertheless, with a basic Dumont criticism: the excessive centralization of decision-making in Castro, which means survival of the old Latin American tradition of the *caudillo*. As a Chilean Marxist, a professor at the University of Havana, told him, a new syncretism is being created, a mixture of Catholicism and Marxism, and both rather superficial.

Cardenal rules out any possibility of a change of regime by internal counter-revolution against Castro. But the basic problem of continuity after Castro remains unanswered. Cardenal's vivid sketches of the fossilized bureaucrats and self-serving flunkies who survive in considerable numbers among the ideologically committed suggest that the outcome is far from predetermined. As members of the local defense forces, the people are all armed. They support the regime primarily because of personal allegiance to Castro.

What dissatisfactions Cardenal found were less with the objectives of the regime than with the uneven fulfillment of those objectives. Nearly all the young people he met were vociferously critical and—to his amazement—expressed their criticisms publicly without fear of reprisal. They complained that repression continued, that homosexuals were hounded, that militant Catholics were excluded from the university, that books

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were arbitrarily suppressed, that long hair and tight pants were ruled counter-revolutionary. But all this, they insisted, was done behind Castro's back. When he discovered an injustice, he corrected it forthwith.

The total picture is of a society full of contradictions, yet with a sense of purpose and with enviable successes. Even if Havana was "as serious as a reformed prostitute," the people had self-respect. "Nobody was chasing after money. No face was strained by poverty. There were no taxis cruising on the watch for foreigners, no prostitutes, no bootblacks, no beggars." Cardenal contrasts this frugal equality with the opulence and misery of the banana republics of Central America pilloried in his protest poems. Here he found no bankers "like sharks who have smelled blood," no entrepreneurs doing business on the principle that "you can buy a congressman for less than a mule."

Far more negative in his summing-up of the church situation. He believes the Cuban Catholics are themselves to blame for the disabilities they suffer. A few, including Archbishop Francisco Oves of Havana and Papal Nuncio Cesare Zacchi, are on the side of the revolution and regard the new society as more Christian than the old. Some progressives believe—as does Cardenal—that one can simultaneously be a Catholic and a Marxist. But most Catholics had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They went to church to protest their loss of wealth and privilege. They constituted "the most reactionary church in Latin America." Celebrating mass in a Cuban church gave Cardenal "the sensation of performing a false rite within a sect, while true Christianity was outside."

Like Merton, Cardenal had a conversion experience before he joined the Trappists, and he says the experience was renewed by what he saw in Cuba.

> *A great change had taken place in my life; it was the most important change since my religious conversion. And it was like another conversion. I had discovered that now, in Latin America, to practice religion was to make revolution. There can be no authentic Eucharist except in a classless society. . . . Socialism made it possible to live the Gospels in society. . . . Fidel had reconciled us with communism.*

It takes a poet to translate a poet, even when he writes prose. Unfortunately little of the music and imagination of the original carries over into this pedestrian and over-literal version by Donald D. Walsh. In addition to errors identifiable only by reference to the original, lapses of style and expression that proper editing would have eliminated are frequent. Ernesto Cardenal deserves better.

Gary MacEoin

GARY MACEOIN's *most recent books are* Northern Ireland: Captive of History *(Holt, Rinehart & Winston) and* No Peaceful Way: the Chilean Struggle for Dignity *(Sheed & Ward).*

Parents & Babies

The Future of Motherhood by Jessie Bernard Pronatalism: The Myth of Mom and Apple Pie edited by Ellen Peck and Judith Senderowitz

(Dial; $10)

Biology may no longer be destiny but so far babies are still coming in the same packages they always came in—women's bodies. And while they may not be coming quite as frequently as they once did, they are still arriving with alarming—at least according to some population experts—regularity and they are still creating the same demands and need-for-nurturing situations they have always created. Two new publications examine this situation of women as real or potential mothers and suggest that some startling rearrangements are in order.

Jessie Bernard's new work, *The Future of Motherhood,* indicates that mothering behavior and responsibilities need not, in fact, should not be assigned solely to one sex. Essentially a survey, this book provides the first balanced, historically and scientifically documented, and also predictive view of women functioning in their most obvious role, the role of mother. Despite economic and ecological pressures, mother remains a role most women alive today will eventually fill.

Bernard realistically examines motherhood and all the roles that are created when a woman becomes pregnant: childbearer, child-rearer and more and more often for the woman, child-supporter. She concludes that motherhood as institutionalized in our society may be the worst form of the role ever realized. The isolated and unrelieved mother in the nuclear home unit with sole responsibility for child care and love may, indeed, be dangerous to herself and to her child.

However she does not simplistically suggest—as do many woman today—that adding a job plus daycare to the situation of these mothers will automatically eliminate or even alleviate the strain. Combine a career and children? When a woman answers "yes" to this loaded question, she is censured by society and by her own conscience; she is exhausted trying to fill both roles well. Bernard suggests a more viable method of coping.

"Why women's two roles?" she asks. "Why should women do more of the nation's work than men?" Ultimately this is the question—and in many ways,

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the answer—for the future of motherhood. Bernard predicts the expansion of fatherhood. "Both children and the social order will profit by opening up motherhood for men to share."

True, this is easier said than done. However Bernard, sociologist and one of the nation's leading experts on family affairs, does consider this phenomenon of role-sharing, at least where parenting is concerned, from many perspectives, including law, economy, industry, sexuality and technology. And although her findings are not always optimistic, they do provide the reader with a realistic sense of possibility for shared parenting in the near future.

Analyzed in its cultural and anthropological setting, motherhood comes off badly. However the role—if not the traditional structure—may yet be salvaged, according to Bernard. Information and new technology will be able to create a future society where motherhood is no longer a bad joke or a trap or a romantic myth but rather an informed choice on the part of parents and an opportunity to grow for men and women both. "We cannot, in brief, afford to deprive either sex of the strengths of the other. Motherhood, we repeat once more, is too important to leave to women. Inside or outside of the home."

Restructuring the parental role for men as well as women, then, is one projected and possible method of dealing with the situation created by the presence of children. Another projected and possible way? Don't create the situation in the first place. After all in the last quarter of the 20th century men and women have a choice when it comes to reproduction.

No, they don't, not really. This is the claim of the new anthology, *Pronatalism: The Myth of Mom and Apple Pie*, edited by Ellen Peck and Judith Senderowitz and designed to introduce and expose pronatalism and the pro-birth pressures that signal its presence in our society. Pronatalism, like racism and sexism, is a more-or-less invisible evil structured into the very thought processes of men and women—particularly women—in all phases of our culture.

This collection of 24 articles attempts to convince the reader that pronatalist attitudes and policies are pervasive and exert a major force on the lives of human beings. Unfortunately the articles are uneven in quality and with the possible exception of Judith Blake's "Coercive Pronatalism and American Population Policy," tend to be defensive, emotional, slick, or where research is involved out-of-date (one of the most interesting articles about crisis in marriage was first published in 1957).

The concept of the childfree, rather than childless, marriage introduced in the final section of the book provides personal and academic approaches to the phenomenon of the married couple who choose not to reproduce and makes for interesting and thought-provoking reading. Evidence indicates that a growing number of couples are making this decision and that evidence tends to undermine the premise of the editors.

Bernard has relevant material to work with when she projects the future role possibilities for women who choose to be mothers; Peck and Senderowitz may be correct in their perception that pronatalism in this country is a controlling social force, but the articles they have chosen do little more than restate the fact and offer no realistic solutions.

Loretta Shpunt

LORETTA SHPUNT *teaches English at Trinity College, Washington, DC and is completing her doctorate in higher education from the University of Iowa.*

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"The way out of this situation can only come along the lines expressed and implied in Professor Arens' masterly book. It is a landmark in forensic psychiatry and humanistic jurisprudence."

—Frederick Wertham, M.D.,
(in the *New York Law Journal*
July 19, 1974)

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Sam Bass Warner, Jr. on housing

Nothing sours a generous liberal spirit more quickly, unless it is school integration, than the Federal housing program. Who wants a public housing project on their block? Yet what could be a more worthy expenditure of tax dollars than building decent housing for one's fellow citizens?

Since 1934 our federal policies have been a curdled mix of philanthropy and industrial subsidies, not the generous provision of standard homes to supplement the inevitable shortfall of the private housing market. Conservatives in Congress and in the cities have bound our public housing efforts to the needs of the building industry and the construction unions, and have levied as their tax for consent an agreement to subsidize banks and land traders. The resulting program-mix exacerbates, not softens, the nation's class and racial tensions.

Forest Hills Diary: The Crisis of Low-Income Housing
by Mario Cuomo
(Random House; $6.95)

Housing the Urban Poor
by Arthur P. Solomon
(MIT Press; $12)

In the abstract the provision of decent housing is a nonproblem. Many European nations have demonstrated how governments can provide adequate housing as a matter of right, not as grudging philanthropy. The US itself is dotted with successful examples. Ghetto projects, ghetto schools and ghetto crime are not the inevitable consequences of population movement and industrial growth. There is no need, in Cuomo's words, to "drag down another area of stength in our city—to wit, the middle class communities. . . ." Relief from our condition requires public policy to shift from philanthropy to civility, from welfare to full employment and decent jobs so that the schools lead somewhere, from slums and suburbs to the metropolitan provision of decent housing for all classes so that the young can go their own way and raise families in peace.

The current pervasive fear of crime, in ghetto and suburb alike, unfortunately, will not create the unity of interest necessary to redirect public policy toward sustained and massive job, income and housing efforts. "Crime, a growing resentment of welfare, increasing taxes, the fear of an increasing black population, all combine to move the Jews—and the rest of the middle class—away from the liberal point of view and toward whatever else is available," Cuomo reports from Forest Hills. It's the same everywhere.

So what do we do now? What are the next steps that a sick and segregated society can take? Cuomo and Solomon attempt to answer these questions by telling us how, as a beginning, we might do the right, just thing while faced with bad alternatives dictated by our class and racial conflicts.

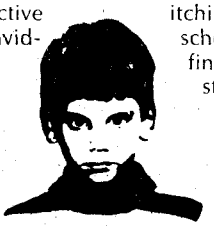
Mario Cuomo is a New York lawyer with an active real estate practice. He was appointed in 1972 by Mayor Lindsay to seek a compromise between vociferous Forest Hills community groups and the New York Housing Authority. At issue was the construction of a typical, massive, 860-unit, tower, low-income housing project. After several months of listening to all comers (only organized liberals living far from the site appeared publicly in favor), Cuomo proposed cutting the towers and the project in half in order to make them better conform to the neighborhood.

This fascinating book is the diary of a mistake, and a narrative of the tortured processes whereby our modern bureaucratic and media-dominated municipal politics corrects its mistakes. Initially, one hurried afternoon, a committee selected the site. The design program was set in a thoughtless drive to capture ever more federal money for the city of New York; the neighborhood was neither considered nor consulted. At the end of a six-year chain of events came the political explosion that captured the attention of the media because the scene was New York and Mayor Lindsay was running for President, an explosion that resulted from middle-class and working-class exasperation with federal social programs, providing President Nixon with the case he capitalized on to compromise and curtial the federal housing effort.

Cuomo's day-by-day recording of his

"Sobering thoughts on educational inflexibility."—*Saturday Review/World*

"It poses the educational problem of 'coercive intrusion of the collective into the life and mind of the individual,' providing stimulating papers by way of response. . . . A variety of essays probe the psychological, jurisdictional, sociological, political, and economic aspects of mandatory public education and stress the dilemma faced by dissenting parents afoul of truancy laws."—*Saturday Review/World*



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reactions to demonstrators, politicians, administrators and housewives shows civic life as we all know it. There is a wonderful you-are-there quality in the lawyer's record and speculations that will challenge the reader's values and emotions. In time Cuomo's own values emerge, and they are in contradiction to the commitment to decency that informs his arbitrator's role. They are the values of social mobility. He justifies public housing on scattered sites as a means of helping the poor become standard Americans.

Cuomo is convincing when he states that, even with the inadequate programs of the moment, some worthwhile steps can be taken to relieve the shortage of decent housing for the poor. His book urges us not to give up but to keep trying. Surely this is essential. But he and a majority of Americans must stop seeing federal housing as a philanthropy to school the poor, and instead view the provision of standard housing as a right of all citizens. Until our values change in this way we will remain enmeshed in all the conflicts Cuomo knows so well.

Arthur Solomon proposes a first step toward helping a cross and reluctant America out of the predicament Cuomo records. *Housing the Urban Poor* is a scholarly analysis of the costs and benefits of alternative housing strategies—conventional public-housing construction, public leasing of private housing for the poor, rent supplements to private landlords, rent supplements to tenants, and supplements with rehabilitation payments for landlords.

His conviction is that we must accept as facts of American life the class and racial tensions of the cities. We must recognize our historical record of largely unsatisfactory public housing projects. These premises, and his cost-benefit analyses, lead him to conclude that the most efficient way to help the poor obtain decent housing is through rent subsidies granted directly to low-income families. Armed with extra income such tenants could find their own housing. It would be standard, code-conforming housing, because the subsidy would raise such families to a higher housing market. The benefits to the nation would be extensive: decent housing for the low-income third of the population, an increase in the maintenance and quality of old city neighborhoods, and less class and racial segregation. HUD rent-supplement experiments conducted in Kansas City and Hawaii have shown that recipients scatter much more through the metropolis than has been possible with conventional public-housing projects that concentrate the poor on inner-city sites.

Solomon's book is technical but clear, well presented and persuasive. His data comes largely from Boston where vacancies are numerous, and this research base is a shortcoming. In cities where housing is in short supply, rent supplements will become landlord subsidies unless the federal government builds for the poor itself. The ultimate hope Solomon's book expresses is for a federal policy whose underpinning is rent supplements for the poor. On this foundation housing-construction programs of all kinds would be erected to meet the needs of the nation's metropolitan regions.

Housing the Urban Poor is an important book. In technical terms that administrators will appreciate, Solomon confirms the old maxim that to help the poor—give money. In the surly, conservative mood of present politics, his proposal for rent supplements is a just and likely fresh start for a decent federal housing policy.

SAM BASS WARNER, JR. *is an urban historian and professor of history and social science at Boston University.*

Fantasy

My love has gone into the arbor, she has gone
into each curl and spin of the vine.
There is must on her white cheeks and lips
like the milky foreshoot of low wine. My love
has gone into the grape leaves, spider down
web and devil's spit woven into her hair.

She was walking in a pittance of spring light
the sky threw down from peach groves to the valley
when the vineyard drew her away.
Now the stalk grows deep in her throat,
cave roof of her mouth, the bed of her tongue.
She is humming in the channels of the vine,
she will go where the light comes from.

Spirits of the sky who suck your colors from the earth,
green ghosts of the earth who have plowed your leaves under,
over and over again,
witness this vow of mine:
I will have her back. This is no season for darkness,
no time to lose.
If the sun will not break through the clouds
I will break through them.

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

MR. EPSTEIN *is the author of a book of poetry,* No Vacancies in Hell *(Liveright).*

Fine Print

Lost Leonardo

Doris Grumbach

True, the great opening, or series of nights of openings, in Washington this month was at the new Hirshhorn Museum, but for some others it was the display at the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology of 14 actual pages from Leonardo daVinci's newly discovered 380-page Madrid Codices. Beautifully displayed here, together with some of the models of machines made by IBM from Leonardo's drawings, the 14 folios will be shown in the US only at the Smithsonian, until the first of the year.

The folios are well displayed, hung in glass cases and covered with heavy orange plexiglas that protects them from the museum's display lights, but unfortunately changes the color of the

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originals somewhat. Lost since the middle of the 19th century when the two volumes from which these folios are taken (for exhibit purposes, but then to be returned to Madrid and rebound), were miscataloged at the National Gallery of Madrid's library, they are well preserved because they had been out of the light for centuries.

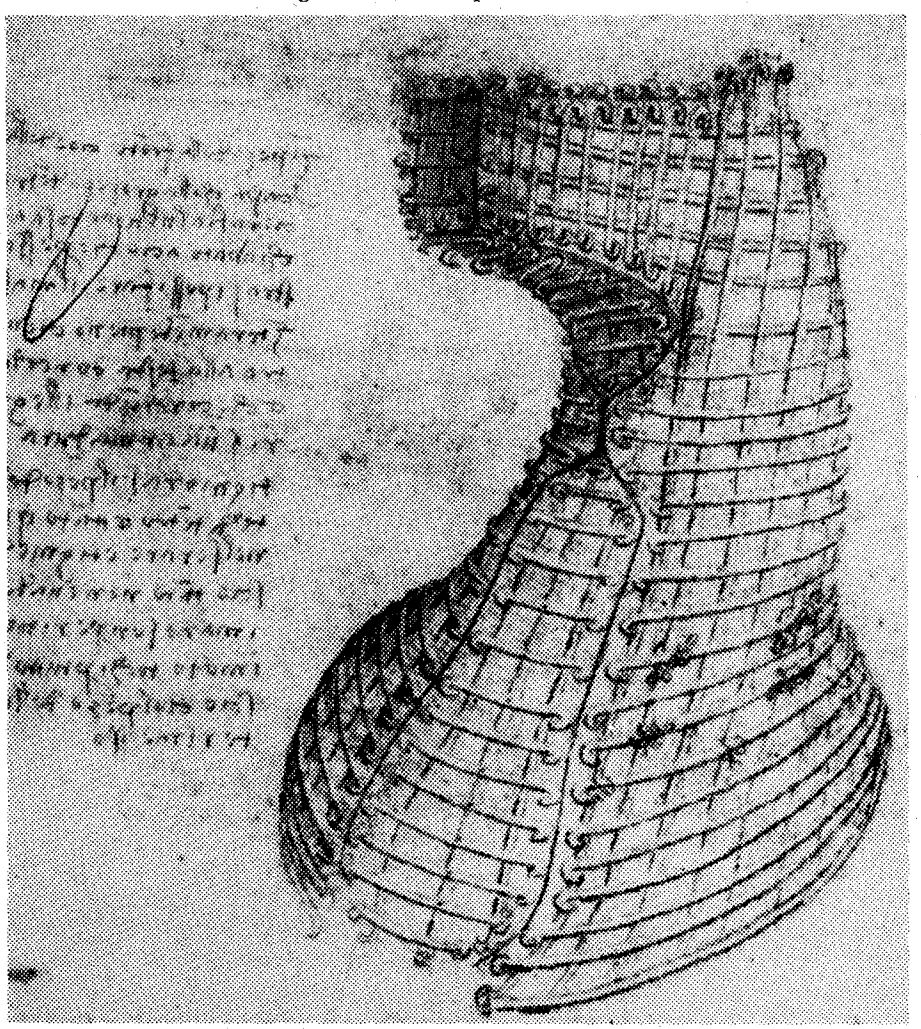
The story of the finding of the two codices is full of interesting assertions and allegations. In 1965 a student of medieval ballads, Dr. Jules Picus, was looking for materials in the National Library when he noticed a break in the catalog numbers he was sending for. On a chance he sent for the two undescribed numbers and received the long-lost Leonardo notebooks along with his ballad books. He is said to have smuggled them out, microfilmed and authenticated them, returned them to the Library, and then come to America to try to place himself at a university with the find in hand. Appointed to the University of Massachusetts, he announced their discovery at a press conference in 1967 there. The Library, however, claimed that he had not "found" the books, but that the cataloging error had been discovered in 1964 by the Library's ms. division, and that the two codices had been on display before Picus' "discovery." As a result Picus' name appears nowhere in McGraw-Hill's publicity for their new facsimile addition, or in the one-volume **Unknown Leonardo** they are publishing this month, or in the Smithsonian's own leaflet for their current exhibit.

The black-tie opening audience for the showing of the folios heard a scholarly speech by Prof. Ludwig H. Heydenrich, who wrote the chapter on architecture for the volume. He pointed out how much the once-lost codices reveal to us of Leonardo's powerful intellect. Booklovers will be pleased to know that, without being able to view the pages "in the flesh," or to purchase the limited (1000), five-volume, deluxe facsimile edition of the whole ($750; $400 for the "regular" edition), they can own a fine new study of them. *The Unknown Leonardo* ($34.50 until the first of the year, $39.50 after) is copiously illustrated, and contains as well some illuminating essays by Leonardo scholars relating the new finds to such subjects as his knowledge and practice of art, architecture, music, weaponry, engineering, technology (this chapter written by the book's editor, the late Ladislao Reti, who died as it was going to press). There is an absorbing essay on Leonardo's understanding of clockwork elements and pendulum motion written by the Smithsonian's Dr. Silvio A. Bedino together with Dr. Reti.

Codex Madrid I (circa 1495) shows Leonardo's drawings on ball and roller bearings; a mechanism that was reinvented in the 1920s for the purpose of blind-flying instruction on airplanes; a water wheel for generating maximum hydraulic energy; versions of chain transmission; and a worm gear, rediscovered in the 18th century and then named for the "new" inventor, Hindley. The second *Codex* is a notebook, with entries from 1491-1505 into which Leonardo entered matters as diverse as maps, plans for the diversion of a great river, translations from Euclid, plans for the fortification of the city of Piombino and, most fascinating, his blueprints (see cut) for the casting in bronze of an enormous equestrian statue. Planned as a tribute by Leonardo's patron, Lodovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, in memory of the duke's father, it was never erected because the necessary bronze was diverted into cannon. In addition there is a listing of the 116 books in Leonardo's possession; the world had previous knowledge of only a few of these.

The appendix contains pages, hidden for almost four centuries by a pasting error in the manuscripts of another Leonardo book, the *Codex Atlanticus*, showing his drawings for a machine that closely resembles the modern bicycle, complete with forward pedaling and the toothed gear and chain, a device rediscovered at the end of the 19th century.

The great advantage of this 320-page demonstration of Leonardo's genius, which will be simultaneously published this month in seven countries, is its arrangement by subject matter rather than as a mere reproduction of pages as they occur in the original. The interested general reader can learn much by looking, studying, reading about "the most relentlessly curious man in history," as Sir Kenneth Clark has described him. In these days when much commercial publishing is not especially distinguished by concern for scholarship and fine printing, when so much of what comes out is on-demand writing, an instant production to fit the immediate occa-



Courtesy Smithsonian Institution

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sion, the publication of this volume, and of course, the five-volume facsimile edition, will add to McGraw-Hill's reputation as the publisher responsible for these extraordinary books. The *Unknown Leonardo* will lead the field of Christmas gift-giving books. It is a publishing venture that will outlast a season.

From fiction-consumer RB: Henri Peyre has written of Jean Dutourd that he "promises to be one of the minor talents of his generation and one of the rare entertaining writers of an age that prefers to wallow in its anguish rather than to laugh at it." The latter attitude is, indeed, the one assumed by Dutourd in his eighth novel, **The Springtime of Life** (Doubleday; $6.95, translated by Denver and Helen Lindley). In the guise of fiction, it satirizes France of 1938, courtship, love, honor, marriage, widows, feminine wiles, de Gaulle, finance, child care, politics, authors, critics, journalists, friendship, servants, and a dozen other features germane to the human experience.

The story, recounted with more detail than action, more commentary than dialogue, concerns two young friends, Jean and Jacques, who hope to become writers. The first is the son of a *petit bourgeois* widow who smothers him with maudlin artifices. The second, scion of a wealthy financier and self-centered, prattling mother, enjoys their wise, parabolically administered assistance. Both are ultimately ringed by two designing females; each succeeds in his own goal, one becoming a reputable columnist and the other a novelist. This plot outline is far from suggesting the delightful, epigrammatic prose of the author who writes in the classical tradition of Voltaire and Balzac.

Dutourd's insight into people's motives, behavior and the society they devise to fool themselves and others is sophisticated. As one character states: "Sadness and misfortune are contagious, like typhoid fever. This is not a superstitution; I know from experience . . . You shake hands with a failure, you talk with him for a quarter of an hour, you listen amiably to his jeremiads . . . And it never fails, that afternoon you lose 30 points on all your stocks on the exchange." Dutourd has no intention of so infecting his readers; his novel treats serious themes with joyous wisdom.

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On Amnesty

Sirs:

In your discussion of the so-called "Amnesty" program ("Clemency and the Watergate Tragedy," *TNR*, Sept. 28, 1974) you overlooked the possibility that many of the war resisters who left the US to avoid ravaging the Vietnamese do not wish to return permanently. Having established homes elsewhere they may be interested only in occasional visits to relatives and friends in the US. President Ford's plan would require them either to give up their new lives abroad or to remain permanently in exile. Some clemency!

James A. Mason
Richmond Hill, Ontario
Canada

Sirs:

You state (Sept. 28, 1974): "Amnesty with no alternative obligation undertaken would have seemed unjust to convicted evaders and deserters who have been penalized whatever the reason for their defection."

In the 18 months I spent at McNeil Island, and in the years I had been "involved" with antiwar activities, I never met anyone, convicted or otherwise, who felt that because he had suffered as a result of his actions, others too must suffer. . . . I have never felt, by the way—and most of my fellow dissenters with whom I've communicated feel the same way—that I should ask pardon or forgiveness for refusing to participate in the war effort. If anything, the government of this country, and by extension its people, should ask pardon of those whom it imprisoned, or forced out of the country under threat of imprisonment, or siphoned into Vietnam to fight. And it (we) should also ask forgiveness from the families and friends and lovers of those who went there to die, in a pursuit of folly most of us will never understand.

As for "amnesty"—forgetting—that would be our biggest mistake of all.

J. K. Osborne
Seattle, Wash.

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Guaranteed Pensions

Sirs:
In your September 7 note on "Guaranteed Pensions," after describing how big labor and big business successfully lobbied for a weak pension bill, you report an "anonymous Democrat" as saying that Ralph Nader and I "represented nothing but our 'idealistic stupidity' and . . . the battle was being fought on vesting and accrued benefits and all they wanted to talk about was portability." What utter irresponsibility not to have the decency to call me and ask what I might have to say. The publication of anonymous charges without an opportunity to comment before publication has a name—it is McCarthyism. If I were that Democrat I would want to be anonymous also—because he's demonstrably a liar.

For example my letter in the October 20, 1973 *New Republic* took vigorous issue with *TNR*'s hosannahs for Senate passage of S.4, the bill that became the act under discussion. Fully half of that letter criticized the weakness of its vesting provisions. My testimony before the Senate Labor Committee and Finance Committee in 1971, 1972 and 1973 stressed the crucial importance of vesting and the inadequacy of the Williams-Javits vesting proposals. . . .

But what really disappoints me is that only after enactment of the pension act is the news beginning to emerge in print that big labor joined big business in lobbying for weak vesting standards. Had that story been out two years ago, as I urged *TNR* and others, the AFL-CIO might have been embarrassed into different lobbying tactics.

Merton C. Bernstein
The Ohio State University

In reply:
In reporting the invective of a Democrat who worked on the pension bill we did not mean to slight the work of Merton Bernstein, whose opinions are familiar to us as they must be to anyone who has read about pension reform. We intended rather to convey the frustrations of one committeeman who felt he had just passed through a whipsaw of criticism that reminded him of the whipsaw that tore apart welfare reform. His words were spontaneous and strong, and we thought they deserved notice. He believed that "public defenders" like Mr. Bernstein and the Nader associates hindered their cause and its supporters in Congress by ignoring political reality. Specifically he thought these reform publicists could have been more useful at the end of the long debate if they had set aside their theories on portability—which had virtually no support in Congress—and devoted themselves to the battle at hand on vesting rights.

The Editors

The Pardon

Sirs:
To John Osborne's question ("White House Watch," *TNR*, Sept. 28, 1974), "what more should we require from the broken man [Nixon]," the answer clearly is not Mr. Osborne's "no more" but rather "exactly what is required of everyone else under American law." Are all potential defendants to be pardoned before trial if they can manage to appear "broken"? Clearly not.

Then why Nixon? He should have been the last, not the first, to be pardoned—and this precisely because of, not despite, the "high office" so often invoked by his sympathizers. No nation can remain free if it exempts from prosecution those with the greatest power to commit crimes.

Mr. Osborne splenetically attacks "screamers" who oppose the pardon and thereby exhibit, in his opinion, "a quality of savagery that is close to sadism." This amazing misdirection of anger suggests that he has utterly missed the ominous historical significance of what has happened.

Jonathan Penner
Iowa City, Iowa

Is Rocky the One?

Sirs:
You can provide neither intellectual leadership nor decent opinion if you persist in offering commentary like "Rocky's the One," (*TNR*, Aug. 31, 1974). I submit that Nelson Rockefeller is an arrogant, extremely dangerous man who is in the process of being elevated to high national office without so much as a legitimate doubt cast in his direction. All one hears again and again is that conservative Republicans booed him in 1964 and still hate and oppose him. That seems to be the stamp of approval. Such studied nonthink has not been in evidence since the Tonkin Gulf resolution.

Is Attica nothing but a "political wart"? Is the former governor's pandering to the electorate these last few years nothing but "veering to the right"? You must be the last informed observers to count building roads and universities as the marks of a progressive, innovative and reform administration. Wealthy states—and nations—progress in these areas regardless of the incumbent executive (Reagan, California, Nixon, U.S.A.). For Rockefeller's ideas about urban affairs, you are referred to his vicious dealings with New York City; for his imperial ambitions, the billion-dollar Albany rock pile; for his international outlook, the bomb-shelter scare and every shrill, hawklike utterance of the past 10 years.

Rockefeller's character and record cry out for bare-knuckle attack. Instead we get "Rocky," "blue-blood," "at home with intellectuals," and "his privacy . . . invaded without mercy." Humbug!

Joseph A. Miller
Hamden, Conn.

Kauffmann, *from page 16*

tion. The dynamics of the play depends on Margaret, who is offstage for most of Act Two.

The dialogue is garlanded with litanies of repetition, apt enough for characters who enjoy speaking, but sometimes Williams intrudes into their rhetoric. For instance Brick says that he and his football friend used to toss long high passes "that couldn't be intercepted except by time."

Within this unwieldy play of erratic dynamics, the director Michael Kahn has worked hard for centralizing currents, flowing from and to that big bed. He is greatly helped by Elizabeth Ash-

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ley, absent from the New York stage since *Barefoot in the Park* (1963), who is lithe and silkily strong, more *vaginal* than Barbara Bel Geddes in the first production, more feline than Elizabeth Taylor in the film. Speaking of which, by odd chance I came home from the theater to see a clip of the *Cat* film on TV which, alas, finished Keir Dullea's Brick for me. Thirty seconds of Paul Newman in the part underscored that Dullea had been only an earnest yeoman. Fred Gwynne as Big Daddy is rumbly and good enough but not awesomely powerful. Kate Reid is a disaster as Big Mama, flopping around the outside of the role. Two versatile actors, Joan Pape and Charles Siebert, do well enough as Mae and Gooper—and Siebert has the most convincing Mississippi accent of the lot. The bedroom designed by John Conklin fulfills Williams' request that it look like "a set for a ballet," but he has overdone the ruin-and-decay effect of the breakaway ceiling and walls.

This revival, originally produced this summer at the American Shakespeare Festival in Connecticut, does a couple of real services. It brings Ashley back; and the play itself, second-rate Williams though it is, reminds us that he was (is?) a writer who saw (sees?) life through a dramatist's eyes, as distinct from people who go around looking for material for plays.

Gypsy (Winter Garden). This revival, of Ethel Merman's 1959 hit, does something else: it reminds us that some musicals once were good and that now not only the scores and books but also the available personnel have deteriorated. Angela Lansbury is horribly miscast. The Merman pow is exactly what Lansbury doesn't have; her appeal is otherwise, as it was in *Mame*. I spent two hours in dread of seeing either hemorrhage or hernia or both. The only appealing performance is by Zan Charisse as the ugly duckling who strips to become a swan.

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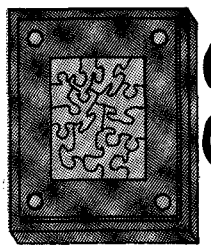

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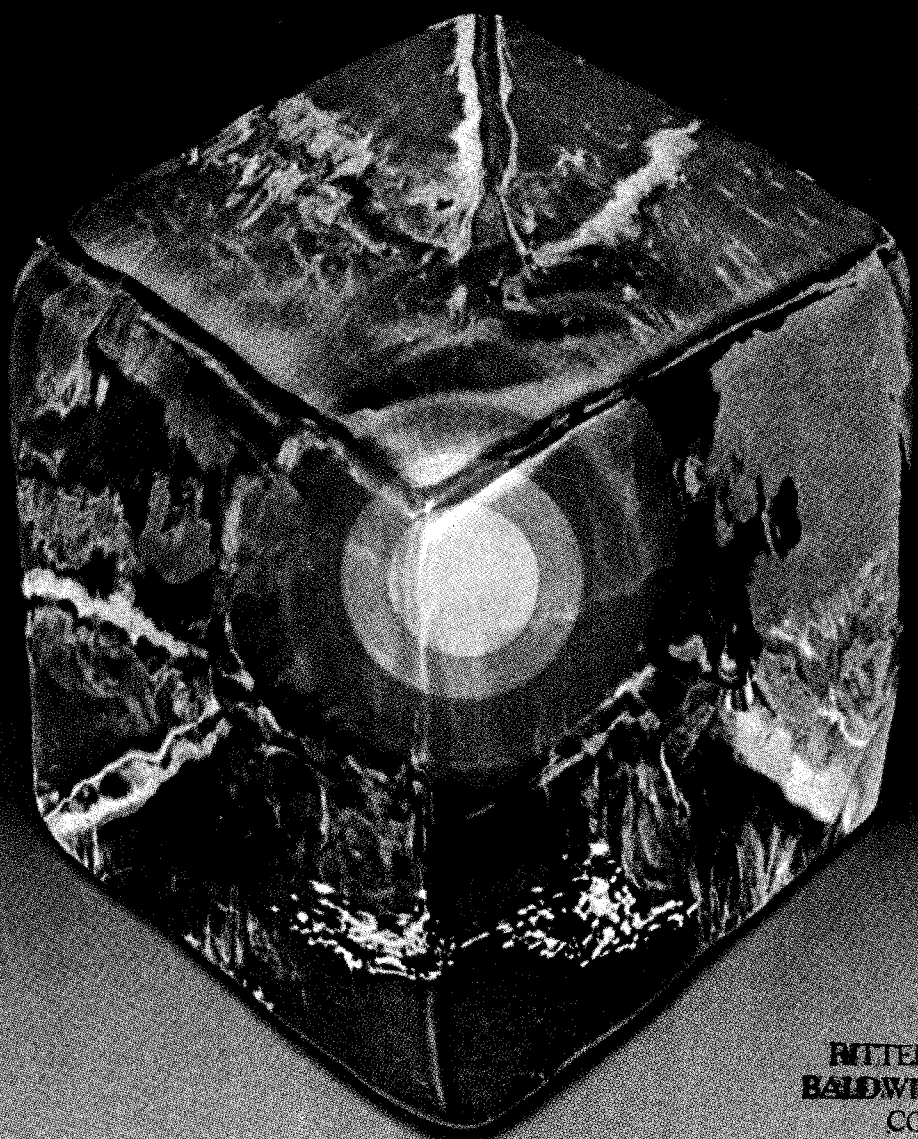

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